

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: Laurel Downtown Historic District

other name/site number:

2. Location

street & number: The district is roughly bounded by the Burlington Northern Santa Fe railroad tracks to the south, Third Street to the north, Wyoming Avenue to the east, and Fifth Avenue to the west.

not for publication: n/a

city/town: Laurel

vicinity: n/a

state: Montana

code: MT

county: Yellowstone

code: 111

zip code: 59044

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally.

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Montana State Historic Preservation Office

State or Federal agency or bureau

(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 see continuation sheet

 determined eligible for the National Register

 see continuation sheet

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 see continuation sheet

 removed from the National Register

 see continuation sheet

 other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Name of Property**County and State****5. Classification****Ownership of Property:** Private, Public-Local**Number of Resources within Property****Category of Property:** District

Contributing

Noncontributing

5715 buildings 1 sites**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register:** n/a13 structures1 objects**Name of related multiple property listing:** n/a5919 Total**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions:**

DOMESTIC/ multiple dwelling, secondary structure, hotel
 COMMERCE/ business, professional, organizational,
 financial institution, specialty store, department store,
 restaurant
 SOCIAL/ meeting hall
 GOVERNMENT/ city hall, fire station, post office
 EDUCATION/ library
 RELIGION/ religious facility
 RECREATION AND CULTURE/ theater, museum
 AGRICULTURE/ processing, storage
 HEALTH CARE/ medical business

Current Functions:

DOMESTIC/ multiple dwelling, secondary structure, hotel
 COMMERCE/ business, professional, organizational,
 financial institution, specialty store, restaurant
 SOCIAL/ meeting hall
 GOVERNMENT/ city hall
 RELIGION/ religious facility
 HEALTH CARE/ medical business
 LANDSCAPE/ park

7. Description**Architectural Classification:**

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY
 REVIVALS/ Classical Revival

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY
 REVIVALS/ Mission

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
 MOVEMENTS/ Commercial Style

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
 MOVEMENTS/ Bungalow/Craftsman

MODERN MOVEMENT/ Moderne

MODERN MOVEMENT/ International Style

Materials:

foundation: concrete

walls: brick, concrete, stucco, ceramic tile, wood, metal

roof: asphalt, metal, wood shingle

other:

Narrative Description

See Section 7 continuation sheets.

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" for criteria qualifying the property.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Agriculture
Architecture
Commerce
Industry
Transportation

Period of Significance

1906-1960

Significant Dates

1906, 1908

Significant Person(s)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

Ilpp, G. M.
Jackson and Co.
McAllister, G. M.
McIver-Cohagen and Marshall
Platz and Weatherford
T. A. Rigney

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Section 8 continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographic References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Section 9 continuation sheets.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ___ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ___ previously listed in the National Register
- ___ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ___ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ___ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ___ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
- ___ Other State agency
- ___ Federal agency
- ___ Local government
- ___ University
- ___ Other
- Specify Repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Approximately 20 acres

UTM References:

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	12	0673167	5059543	P	12	0673570	5059839
B	12	0673164	5059597	Q	12	0673603	5059847
C	12	0673228	5059602	R	12	0673619	5059814
D	12	0673228	5059645	S	12	0673667	5059832
E	12	0673300	5059665	T	12	0673667	5059845
F	12	0673292	5059699	U	12	0673721	5059856
G	12	0673341	5059715	V	12	0673730	5059831
H	12	0673353	5059687	W	12	0673891	5059894
I	12	0673406	5059708	X	12	0673870	5059947
J	12	0673391	5059758	Y	12	0673928	5059969
K	12	0673457	5059793	Z	12	0673949	5059911
L	12	0673463	5059839	AA	12	0674001	5059933
M	12	0673511	5059844	BB	12	0674024	5059877
N	12	0673516	5059905	CC	12	0673681	5059742
O	12	0673562	5059906	DD	12	0673700	5059694
				EE	12	0673301	5059542

All UTM's are NAD 83.

Legal Location (Township, Range & Section(s)):

Southeast and southwest quarters of Section 9, Township 2S, Range 24E

Northwest quarter of Section 16, Township 2S, Range 24E

Verbal Boundary Description

See Section 10 continuation sheets.

Boundary Justification

See Section 10 continuation sheets.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Sara Adamson

organization:

street & number: PO Box 1493

city or town: Wilson state: WY

date: March, 2010

telephone: 307 690 4768

zip code: 83014

Property Owner

name/title: See Continuation Sheets

street & number:

city or town: state:

telephone:

zip code:

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Setting

Laurel, Montana is located fifteen miles west of Billings, Montana's largest urban center, and a mile north of the banks of the Yellowstone River, near the confluence of the Yellowstone and the Clarks Fork of the Yellowstone. Interstate 90 passes immediately south of Laurel. The Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad, an east-west rail corridor, runs parallel to Laurel's Main Street, and branches at Laurel to run south to Red Lodge. The land to the east and southeast of Laurel is dominated by Montana Rail Link's Laurel Yards. Laurel's older residential neighborhoods stretch to the north of the district in a north-south grid of wide streets, with one other older residential neighborhood, known historically as Germantown, to the southwest. Modern subdivisions have been developed around the northeast, north, and northwest of town. South of the railroad tracks and north of Interstate 90, a short stretch of First Avenue is lined with modern gas stations, hotels, and chain stores. The Cenex refinery is located less than one mile south of Laurel. The land area of the city of Laurel is 1.9 square miles, with an average elevation of 3,300.¹ The topography of the city is generally flat, sloping gradually downhill south to the Yellowstone River.

Laurel is located on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, on Clark's return journey route. It is also located along the Nez Perce (Nee-Me-Poo) National Historic Trail, and the Canyon Creek Battlefield, the site of one of the Nez Perce battles, is approximately six miles north of Laurel.² Riverside Park, which has been over the years a Depression-era transient camp, a Works Progress Administration camp, and a camp for European Prisoners of War during World War II, is located approximately one mile south of the survey area.³

General Description

The Laurel Downtown Historic District encompasses approximately twenty acres, or slightly more than eight city blocks. The district is comprised of fifty-nine contributing resources, including fifty-seven buildings, one structure, and one object. Within the boundaries of the district, there are nineteen noncontributing resources, including fifteen buildings, one site, and three structures. No properties within the district have been previously listed on the National Register. The predominant building type in the district is commercial (retail, bars and restaurants, or professional offices), with some multi-story buildings with apartments above and commercial space below, a few single-family houses, one park, one church, one apartment complex, several civic buildings, two former hotels and a motel, several service stations, and two grain elevators.

The heart of the historic district is the eight blocks of East and West Main Street stretching from just east of Fifth Avenue to just west of Wyoming Avenue. Main Street is a wide thoroughfare, with four lanes and parallel parking spaces on each side. Most of the resources on Main Street line the north side of the street, facing the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad tracks. Most of the land on the south side of Main Street within the historic district is owned by the Burlington

¹ "Laurel, Montana", http://www.laurelmontana.org/lcc/Laurel_Facts.html (September 29, 2009); "Laurel, Montana", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laurel,_MT (accessed September 29, 2009); *The W.P.A. Guide to 1930s Montana*, (Tucson: University of Arizona), 194.

² "National Park Service: Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail", <http://www.nps.gov/lecl> (accessed September 29, 2009); "The City of Laurel", http://www.laurel.mt.gov/history_text.html (accessed September 29, 2009).

³ Lynn Fredlund, 24YL169, Riverside Park, Montana Historic Property Record, 1 February 1986.

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Northern Santa Fe Railroad and is leased by Montana Rail Link. Within the district, there are only six properties, five of which are contributing, located between Main Street and the railroad tracks—and all but one of these six are located on West Main Street. Lining the north side of Main Street are thirty-eight properties, twenty-nine of which are contributing. Each block on the north side of Main Street has a concentration of at least fifty percent contributing buildings.

Several of Laurel's most prominent buildings serve as landmarks along Main Street. Starting at the westernmost end of Main Street, the Lohoff Motel (320 West Main Street) is a 1940s motel with integrated garages and a particularly significant mid-century roadside sign. The Laurel State Bank/Laird Apartments building (301 West Main Street) was the earliest brick building in Laurel, and the base of operations for Walter Westbrook, one of the most important early businessmen in Laurel's history. The Westbrook Held Brick Block/Lennox Hotel building (217-221 West Main Street) is a substantial, brick commercial block built by Walter Westbrook, which housed a hotel on the second floor and retail space on the first. The Laurel Trading Company (119 West Main Street) is one of the oldest surviving and best preserved, frame, false-front buildings in Laurel, and one of the longest-running businesses in the city. The grain elevator at 102 West Main Street, originally the Occident Elevator Company, is the most prominent landmark in downtown Laurel, located at the main intersection of Main Street and First Avenue. Across from it, the Wold Building (101 West Main Street), a large, brick commercial block built by Walter Westbrook, is one of the first buildings encountered when approaching Laurel from the south, and has long been an anchor for Laurel's commercial area. Starting at the corner opposite the Wold Building, 101 East Main Street, the building originally built as Citizen's National Bank, is also one of the first buildings encountered when approaching Laurel from the south. Its elaborate brick and terra cotta architecture evokes Laurel's prosperous early years of growth. Immediately to the east, Laurel's first three-story building, the McCauley-Spencer building (103 East Main Street) also reflects Laurel's prosperity during the first few decades of the twentieth century. The Hageter Building (6 Montana Avenue), a large brick commercial block with elaborate sheet metal detailing, anchors the east end of the 100 block. The New Yellowstone Hotel, at 301 East Main Street, a three-story hotel built in 1929, is a landmark on the eastern end of East Main Street.

The most prevalent building style along Main Street is Western Commercial in either brick-front or frame, false-front. The buildings on the blocks closest to Main and First Avenue (the 100-300 blocks of West Main, and the 100-200 blocks of East Main) were predominantly built during the first four decades of the twentieth century (1900-1940), while the buildings further to the east and west were built primary after the Second World War.

The district extends north along several avenues, a distance of one to one-and-a-half blocks from Main Street. The density of contributing buildings along the west side of First Avenue particularly contributes to the historic feeling of the district, as most of the buildings on that block are contemporaneous and architecturally similar to the buildings that line Main Street, dating from 1900-1940. There are also two significant clusters of post-war architecture on these side streets, one on Montana Avenue, where three mid-century modern buildings are clustered together including the Mountain States Telephone building (c. 1955). The block to the northwest of the intersection of First Street and First Avenue is also a significant cluster of post-war architecture, including the Laurel City Hall, former Post Office, and several commercial buildings, including the International Style building at 101 West First Street (c. 1946).

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Integrity

Laurel's commercial core, most of which comprises this historic district, is largely intact and representative of the period of significance. The streets, platted blocks, and alleys retain their historic configuration and appearance. The downtown's orientation to the railroad tracks, and the light industrial nature of the land use on the property between the two, are unchanged from the historic period. The pattern of brick and frame, one-, two-, and three-story buildings, most with parallel shop window heights, recessed entries, and zero setbacks are consistent with their historic appearance. Each block has a concentration of at least fifty percent contributing resources.

Storefront window and entrance modifications are nearly ubiquitous in Laurel, as in most Montana communities; however, many buildings whose storefronts have been modified still possess the feeling of commercial storefronts because the remaining portions of their street-front façades retain a good level of integrity. Many buildings with alterations are also documented to appear as they did within the period of significance (1906-1960).

Individual Property Descriptions

Except where noted, all buildings have poured concrete foundations.

5-9 First Avenue. Citizen's National Bank Rear Building. c. 1910 (1 contributing building)⁴

The Citizen's National Bank Rear Building is a one-story, Early Brick Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building had four storefronts originally, now reduced to three. The north bay was an addition constructed between 1920 and 1944. The building has a corbelled brick belt course and pendants.

11-13 First Avenue. Park (formerly the Strand Theater/Royal Theater). c. 1919/2000 (1 noncontributing site)

This property is a landscaped park built c. 2000 after a fire in 1996 destroyed the historic theater that once stood on this site.⁵

12 First Avenue. Yellowstone State Bank/Sande Pharmacy. 1919 (1 contributing building)

The Yellowstone State Bank/Sande Pharmacy building is a two-story, brick and stucco, Beaux-Arts/Neo-Classical, commercial building with a flat roof. The Yellowstone Bank building is comprised of five components: one, an original c. 1919 brick bank building, on the street front of the block and adjacent to the alley; the second and third components are two rear additions to the original bank, one a 1951, brick, two-story historic addition, the other a single-story, brick, non-historic, garage addition; the fourth component is the adjacent 1919 brick building to the north has been annexed to the

⁴ In researching ownership history and construction dates for all buildings, the following sources were consulted. For each property below and throughout the nomination, only sources in addition to these, or specifying page numbers, will be cited:

1912, 1920, 1944 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps; Deeds, researched by First Montana Title in Billings, Montana, files now with the Laurel City Planner; Historic Photographs, Laurel Chamber of Commerce; Gay Easton and Emelie Eaton, "1908 2008: The Centennial," (Laurel, MT: 2008); Elsie Johnston, *Laurel's Story, a Montana Heritage* (Laurel, MT: Frontier Press & Artcraft Printers, 1979); "Yellowstone County Montana", <http://www.co.yellowstone.mt.gov> (accessed July, 2009).

⁵ Emelie Eaton, *Laurel's History through Photos, Tidbits and Memories* (Laurel, MT: Self-published, 2009).

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original building and this building has a one-story, brick, non-historic addition at the rear, the fifth component. While the building has been substantially altered, the original bank building is clearly discernable from the additions, and has some of the most elaborate architectural detailing in Laurel. The 1919 building was constructed to house the Laurel State Bank, which moved from its original home at 301 West Main Street in 1919 or 1920. The bank folded in 1924, during an agricultural depression that caused fifty percent of Montana banks to fail, and sold the building to Bertram Harris, president of the Yellowstone Bank.⁶

16-16½ First Avenue. Peggy's Style Shop/Don's Barber Shop. c. 1920 (1 contributing building)

This building is a two-story, Early Brick Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof, built c. 1920, probably by Everett O. Gates. The rear half of the building is an addition post-1944, likely built in 1960. The building has notable basket-weave brick detailing on the upper portion of the front façade.⁷

18-18½ First Avenue. Laird's Electrical Supply/Dutch Mill Café. c. 1938 (1 contributing building)

This building is a two-story, brick, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The front façade is clad in yellow brick, with red brick details. The building's original front portion is built of reinforced, poured concrete. Marks from the molds are visible on the north wall. It was built by Clarence and Olive Laird, and housed their son, John Laird's electrical business.⁸

19 First Avenue. Pfaff Chiropractic/State Farm Insurance. c. 1930 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick, Brutalist style, commercial building with a metal, mansard roof. The building was built c. 1930 but its current appearance reflects alterations that post-date the 1970s.⁹

206 First Avenue. Scott's Dry Cleaning and Laundry Building. c. 1950 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick, post-war, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof.

208 First Avenue. John and Tena Berkheimer House/Dr. Nottingham, DDS. c. 1907/1947 (2 contributing buildings, 1 noncontributing building)

The c. 1907 house on this property is a one-story, side-gable, frame and stucco building that was originally the home of John and Tena Berkheimer. The c. 1947 commercial building on this property is a one-story, brick, Western Commercial

⁶ "All Losers by Fire to Reopen Businesses," *Laurel Outlook*, 19 July 1919; "Fire Sweeps Half Block," *Laurel Outlook*, 19 July 1919; Ann Kooistra-Manning, "A Walking Tour of Historic Downtown Laurel, Montana," (Yellowstone County, MT: Yellowstone Historic Preservation Board, 2004); "Laurel's New Bank Launched Today," *Laurel Outlook*, 26 May 1926; "Laurel's Strong Banks a Mark of Prosperity," *Laurel Outlook*, 15 December 1920; Don Spritzer, *Roadside History of Montana* (Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press, 1999), 9; "Why It Is to Your Advantage to Invest in Laurel?," *The Billings Daily Gazette*, August 27, 1907; "Yellowstone Banks to Observe Fiftieth Anniversary with Party," *Laurel Outlook*, 18 December 1957.

⁷ R. L. Polk & Co's *Billings City and Yellowstone County Directory*, vol. XIII (Helena, Montana: R. L. Polk & Co. of Montana, 1925).

⁸ City Directories 1940, 1958.

⁹ "Post Office in New Location on First Avenue," *Laurel Outlook*, 31 December 1930.

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style, commercial building with a flat roof built by Fred Warfield as an office for Donald Nottingham, DDS. The modern, rear garage is a one-story, concrete block structure.¹⁰

210-212 First Avenue. Donald Nottingham DDS/Bundy Plumbing and Heating. c. 1952 (1 contributing building)

This post-war building is a one-story, brick, Late Modern style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building's front façade is clad in Roman brick. The building was constructed to house Donald Nottingham's dentist's office, and Theodore and Dorothy Bundy's plumbing business.¹¹

16 Second Avenue. Laurel Creamery. c. 1910 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a one-story, concrete block, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. It was built by Frank Platz and Frank Weatherford. The building has a distinctive, tripartite, rusticated concrete block, front façade with two rows of dentils. Built originally as a garage, in 1934 it became a creamery, and continued to be operated as one until 1998.¹²

20 Second Avenue. Grace Bible Church. 1920 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick, Craftsman style, church building with a daylight basement and a flat roof. This building was constructed by Claude R. Ryan as a creamery and laundry. The building cost \$10,000 and was built by contractor C. W. Laird. The creamery was later located at 16 Second Avenue, and Our Savior's Lutheran Church of Laurel bought this building in 1927, remodeling it to make it their church building. In 1959, the Lutheran Church relocated, selling this building to Grace Baptist Church. In a 1977 remodel, the building was significantly altered.¹³

12 Third Avenue. Laurel Outlook/Benjamin Price Offices. c. 1916, c. 1950 (3 contributing buildings)

This property displays a collection of one-story buildings, including a rectangular, brick, main building with a shed roof, now clad in metal siding, with a connected, frame, apartment building with three units, a flat roof and metal siding; a small, frame, side-gabled house clad in metal siding; and a frame, two-bay, flat-roofed garage, clad in metal siding. While the easternmost building on this property was the early home of Laurel's main newspaper, the *Laurel Outlook*, the property retains too little integrity to reflect that association and is instead significant as a post-war apartment complex.¹⁴

101 West First Street. c. 1946 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a two-story, brick, International style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building is significant as an excellent and well-preserved example of mid-century modern, post-war architecture. The building is built of yellow

¹⁰ Don Brohaugh, Email to Sara Adamson, 27 December 2009.

¹¹ City Directories, 1947, 1965.

¹² Kooistra-Manning.

¹³ "Building Activity in City Still Continues," *Laurel Outlook*, 19 May 1920; "Lutheran People Buy Old Creamery," *Laurel Outlook*, 18 May 1927.

¹⁴ Stephanie Noble, Conversation with Sara Adamson, 29 December 2009 [Noble is Benjamin and Ibbie Price's granddaughter]; "Laurel Outlook Moves to New Home," *Laurel Outlook*, 17 February 1926; "Yuletide Season Again at Hand," *Laurel Outlook*, 13 December 1916.

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brick with red and yellow ceramic tiles. It displays a band of windows on the second floor that appear to be original, and a band of storefront windows surround its entrance, also all apparently original.¹⁵

109 West First Street. US Post Office. c. 1955 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick and terra cotta block, Contemporary style, civic building with a flat roof. Originally built as a post office in the 1950s, the building displays minimal architectural detailing, typical of the post-war era.¹⁶

115 West First Street. Laurel City Hall. 1952-55 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a two-story, brick, Western Commercial style, civic building with a flat roof. The building displays notable yellow and red brick detailing. The western bay was built in 1952 as an addition to the original, frame City Hall. The old City Hall was razed in 1953, and the eastern portion of this building completed in 1955. The building housed the City Fire Department on the ground floor through the 1970s. The firehouse openings have been infilled with windows and doors but still read as original openings.¹⁷

119 West First Street. Laurel Library. c. 1915/1937/1951 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, stucco over brick and frame, Mission/Spanish Revival style, civic building with a flat roof with a central barrel vault. The original building is the western bay (c. 1915), constructed of brick, while the eastern addition (1937), built by the Works Progress Administration, is frame. The stucco covering was intended to match the old section to the new. The rear addition was added in 1951. The building has a distinctive barrel-vaulted roof, and two gabled porches with terra cotta tile roofs and an unusual arrangement of Craftsman-style brackets and Tuscan columns. The building originally had a large, glass block window beneath the barrel vault, with the word "LIBRARY" in relief above it, which has been altered. All additions date to within the period of significance.¹⁸

6 Montana Avenue. The Hageter Building/Marshall Apartments. 1919 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This landmark building is a two-story, brick, Western Commercial style building with a flat roof and a basement. Originally built with space for offices on the second floor and commercial space on the first, the second floor was later converted to apartments. The building has a crenellated brick parapet with sheet-metal cornices at the second and first floor, keystones and voussoirs at the second floor windows, and elaborate brickwork including corbelling and basketweave bonds. The building appears to retain most of its original windows.¹⁹

¹⁵ Ray Schwartzkopf, Walt Joki, Kenny Hageman, Al Greenough, Tom Altman, Yvonne Altman, Brad Krause, and Linda Frickel, Conversation with Sara Adamson, 15 December 2009.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Completed City Hall Now in Use," *Laurel Outlook*, 16 March 1955; "Council Shown Drawings for New City Hall," *Laurel Outlook*, 21 January 1953; "Foundation Run for New Water House," *Laurel Outlook*, 27 September 1950; "Three City Officers Occupy New Building," *Laurel Outlook*, 13 February 1952; "Vault Delaying City Hall Razing," *Laurel Outlook*, 10 June 1953.

¹⁸ "City's Remodeled, Enlarged Library Will Have Formal Public Opening Saturday," *Laurel Outlook*, 24 February 1937; "Funds All Raised for City Library," *Laurel Outlook*, 17 May 1916; "Laurel Expects to Have City Library," *Laurel Outlook*, 10 May 1916.

¹⁹ "American Bank Building Is Purchased," *Laurel Outlook*, 3 July 1929; "Hageter Building [Rendering]," *Laurel Outlook*, 17 December 1919; "Laurel's Strong Banks a Mark of Prosperity."; "To Spend \$153,000 in Business Area," *Laurel Outlook*, 17 September 1919; "To Start Work on

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9 Montana Avenue. Montgomery's Newstand. c. 1910 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, frame, Boomtown/False-front style, commercial building with a shed roof and is one of the few remaining examples of the early, frame, false-front architecture in Laurel.²⁰

11 Montana Avenue. Orchid Cleaners. c. 1950 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, concrete block, Contemporary style, commercial building with a flat roof. Built c. 1950, its minimal architectural detailing is typical of the post-war era.

12 Montana Avenue. Mountain States Telephone. c. 1955 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a one-story, brick and concrete block, International Style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building is an excellent example of mid-century modern architecture, in this case a particularly well-preserved example. The building has a striking façade with an asymmetrical, concrete canopy, angled entrance, and contrasting brick details.

15 Montana Avenue. Smith Dental Practice. c. 1959 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick and concrete block, Contemporary style, commercial building with a shallow, hipped roof. The front façade is clad in oversize, rusticated brick. The building has high, narrow, horizontal windows, a nearly flat roof, and minimal architectural details typical of the 1950s.

13 Pennsylvania Avenue. Eaton's Paint Store. c. 1915 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a one-story, frame, Boomtown/False-front style, commercial building with a shed roof. The building is one of the best preserved examples of early, frame, false-front architecture in Laurel. It is clad in wood, lap siding, with a prominent, shed-roof porch sheltering the storefront, which retains most of its original elements.²¹

19 Pennsylvania Avenue. Hurzler Hotel. 1920 (2 contributing buildings)

The former Hurzler Hotel is a two-story, frame, Western Commercial style building with a flat roof with a frame parapet, and a partial basement. The building is clad in asbestos shingles, many of the windows have been replaced, and a wood cornice has been removed. A fire in 1991 burned through the roof and has caused significant water damage to the interior. The building has an associated, front-gable, frame, garage clad in asbestos shingles. Despite alterations and damage, the original siding is intact beneath the asbestos siding, and the elaborate original entrance is intact. Inside, the original floor plan, millwork, and fixtures survive.²²

\$35,000 Building," *Laurel Outlook*, 16 July 1919; "Trading Laurel Business Block for Ranch Property," *Laurel Outlook*, 6 May 1931; "V&R Store in New Location," *Laurel Outlook*, 20 April 1932.

²⁰ City Directories 1940, 1944, 1947, 1965.

²¹ City Directories 1940, 1954.

²² "Laurel's Growth in Year Has Been Phenomenal," *Laurel Outlook*, 15 December 1920.

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101 East Main Street. Citizen's National Bank. 1912 (1 contributing building)

This building is a three-story, Early Brick Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building has elaborate, unglazed terra cotta architectural details, particularly on the west façade. The south façade originally had a similarly elaborate entrance, but was altered prior to 1937 to accommodate a pharmacy, and the façade today reflects those changes. The third floor addition was added c. 1993. The building is a landmark in the historic district and one of the first buildings encountered when entering Laurel from the south.²³

103 East Main Street. The McCauley-Spencer Block. 1917 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a three-story, brick, Western Commercial style, residential and commercial building with a flat roof. The largest and most expensive building in Laurel when it was constructed in 1917, the building has elaborate architectural detailing reflecting Laurel's prosperous early years of development, and the optimism for the City's future. The building has a prominent balustrade at the roofline, below which is a dentil cornice. The third story center windows have a balcony, which was intended by architect McIver, Cohagen and Marshall to reflect the original residential function of the building as an apartment house. The building was built by Jackson and Co., a Billings contractor. The building retains its original windows, architectural detailing, and exterior light fixtures.²⁴

105 East Main Street. Laurel Café/Elite Salon. c. 1908 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a three-story, brick, Western Commercial style, residential and commercial building with a flat roof. This building originally had a frame false-front with a dentil cornice at the parapet and double-hung windows at the second floor. It is now clad in artificial stucco (DryVit).

107 East Main Street. Safeway/EFX Photography. 1908 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building originally had a frame false-front, but was re-clad in brick in the 1930s to match the building next door at 109 East Main Street. The Laurel Safeway store was located here from at least 1937 through the 1950s. Today, the only hints that the two buildings were matching are the small sections of exposed brick at the street level; the upper portion of the façade has been clad in stucco.²⁵

108 East Main Street. Chamber of Commerce and Park. 1938 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, L-shaped, log cabin with a hip and side-gable, wood-shingle roof. Fireman's Park, adjacent to the cabin, is a mowed, grass lawn with mature deciduous and evergreen trees, picnic tables, and a 1972 statue of Chief Joseph. The cabin was built in 1938 as the Laurel Roadside Museum, a project of the Montana Highway Department, which designed the building. In 1999, the building was remodeled and expanded.

²³ Kooistra-Manning; "Laurel's Strong Banks a Mark of Prosperity."; "Revival in Building and Business," *Laurel Outlook*, 1 May 1912; "Will Begin Work Soon," *Laurel Outlook*, 24 May 1911.

²⁴ "Laurel's Largest and Most Expensive Building Compares with Any in State," *Laurel Outlook*, 12 November 1917.

²⁵ City Directories 1919, 1942, 1949-50, 1955, 1960; "Nearly \$1,000,000 in New Buildings in Laurel and Fine Ranch Dwellings near By," *Laurel Sentinel*, 4 February 1909.

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109 East Main Street. City Club Inn/Cheerio Cocktail Lounge. c. 1930 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building displays elaborate brickwork in red and yellow brick, in basket-weave and diagonal bonds. A frame building stood on this lot from 1908 until this building was constructed c. 1930, and had housed the Heinz drugstore before it was located next door. By 1937, this building was the City Club Inn, which was renamed the Cheerio Cocktail Lounge in the 1940s.²⁶

111 East Main Street. Heinz Drugstore/ Gene's Pharmacy. 1919 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a one-story, concrete block and brick, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a shed roof and basement. The front façade is clad in red brick with an arched and stepped parapet, cast stone escutcheons and mouldings, and cast stone quoins around the storefront windows. Built in 1919 by John D. Heinz as his drugstore, the building was designed by a Billings architect, and was engineered to allow for future additional stories.²⁷

113 East Main Street. Heinz and Kennedy/ Maurer Chiropractic. 1919 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a two-story, frame, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a shed roof. The red-brick, front façade has a stepped parapet, corbelled brick cornice and basket-weave brick details. The building retains its historic entrance door, transom, and tiled entrance floor. Built in 1919 by John B. Heinz next door to his drugstore, it was originally a candy store and soda fountain.²⁸

115 East Main Street. Elizabeth's Garden. c. 1908 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, frame and concrete block, Boomtown/False-front style, commercial building with a flat roof. The front façade is clad in metal and stucco with a recessed entrance, storefront windows, and a metal awning. One of the few remaining frame, false-front buildings in Laurel, dating to the earliest years of Laurel's boom, this modest building has appeared as it does today for its entire existence, based on historic photos.

117 East Main Street. Board of Trade Bar. c. 1908 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, frame, Boomtown/False-front style, commercial building with a flat roof. The front façade is clad in metal above its metal awning. The storefront was divided into two spaces some time in the 1940s or 1950s, and each storefront has a different entrance configuration. One of the few remaining frame, false-front buildings in Laurel, dating to the earliest years of Laurel's boom, this building was a movie theater in its earliest years, then a billiards hall and Safeway store. The Board of Trade bar was located here at least as early as 1940, and continued in this location until after 2000.²⁹

²⁶ "New Building for Main Street," *Laurel Outlook*, 15 January 1919.

²⁷ "Heinz Sells Drugstore to Erb Brothers of Seattle," *Laurel Outlook*, 5 February 1930; "New Building for Main Street."

²⁸ "Candy Land, New Store, Is Opened," *Laurel Outlook*, 5 November 1919; "Heinz to Erect Another Building," *Laurel Outlook*, 30 July 1919.

²⁹ City Directories, 1925, 1930, 1932, 1937, 1958.

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201 East Main Street. F. J. Valek General Store/Valek Apartments. 1908 (1 contributing building)

This building is a two-story, frame, Boomtown/False-front style, commercial and residential building with a flat roof. The building is clad in vertical-grooved plywood siding. Frank J. Valek built this building in 1908 to house his general store, and his family in an apartment upstairs. While the building has undergone significant alterations, photographs taken within the district's period of significance indicate the alterations had occurred prior to 1960.

203 East Main Street. Owl Café. c. 1915/c. 1958 (1 contributing building)

This building is a Boomtown/False-front style, commercial and residential building. The building has two portions, one a three-story, front-gable, false-front, frame building, which dates to c. 1915, and the other a one-story, L-shaped, concrete block building with a flat roof that envelopes the original building, which dates to c. 1958. The building has a frame, false-front spanning both portions of the building, and a frame, full-width awning. The Owl Café has been in this location since 1924.³⁰

209 East Main Street. Sonny O'Day's. c. 1925 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a one-story, brick and structural tile, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a shed roof. The building has a wire-cut, red-brick, front façade with brick panels in a basket-weave bond. A triangular, 1940s-era canopy reads "Bar-Lounge." The bar was originally owned by Rudolph "Slick" Hageter and Timothy Reardon and was called "Slick and Tim" and later, Slick's Inn. Charles A. George, known professionally as "Sonny O'Day," bought the bar in 1946. George was a professional welterweight boxer, and a member of the Boxing Hall of Fame.³¹

215 East Main Street. Laurel Liquor. 1999 (1 noncontributing building)

Built in 1999 on the former site of the Laurel Lumber company, this building is a one-story, front-gabled, frame, commercial building with an asphalt shingle roof. The building is clad in plywood and metal siding, and has a full width gable porch with wood beams and metal braces.

219 East Main Street. Standard Oil Station/Twistees. c. 1950 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a one-story, frame, Contemporary style, commercial building, has a flat/mansard roof and is clad in composite siding. The building was originally the Standard Oil Station, owned by Marvin Gauslow, and was a Streamline Moderne-style building. The building today reflects physical changes that post-date the 1970s.

301 East Main Street. New Yellowstone Hotel. c. 1929 (1 contributing building)

This building has two parts, one the large, three-story, brick, New Yellowstone Hotel building with a flat roof; the other a one-story, brick, commercial building with a flat roof. Both are in the Western Commercial style. The hotel building has a simple brick parapet with low merlons at intervals. The most distinctive feature of the building is its fenestration: rows of segmental-arched windows, framed with yellow brick. The front entrance to the former hotel has been substantially altered, and the window openings covered, but the remaining features of the hotel survive. The one-story building was the Yellowstone Grill, a restaurant connected with the hotel. It has a parapet that matches the hotel building, and simple

³⁰ City Directory, 1925.

³¹ City Directories, 1930, 1937, 1940, 1947, 1957, 1960, 1965; Shelley Van Atta, Email to Sara Adamson, 8 July 2009; Kooistra-Manning.

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window and entrance openings. The hotel was built and operated by W. B. and Lena Stouffer, and later by their daughter Helen Grainger.³²

305 East Main Street. Laurel Auto and Supply Company/Palace Bowling Alley. c. 1916/c. 1955 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, concrete block, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The front façade is clad in Roman-brick veneer, added c. 1955. The building has an addition to the east, approximately ten feet wide, built c. 1950. The front façade is simple, with a recessed entrance and large window openings, minimal architectural detailing reflecting the post-war era more than the original date of the building's construction c. 1916. Frank Platz and Frank Weatherford, who had a cement contracting company, built this building, as well as 16 Second Avenue, 309 West Main Street, and the Methodist Church on Third Avenue. When it was constructed in 1916, it broke the record for largest floor space for a building in Laurel. The Platz family—Frank Platz and his parents, Annie and Isaac, and brother Tom—owned this building when it was built, and Tom and Owen Platz operated an auto repair business, the Laurel Auto and Supply Company, out of it. The building was converted into a bowling alley in 1949, under John W. Price, and Howard "Slim" Carter's ownership.³³

309 East Main Street. Carquest/Foodland/Laurel Radio and Electric Supply Company. c. 1948 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a one-story, concrete block, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building is clad in vertical metal siding, and has a full-width canopy on the front façade with an asphalt shingle roof. The storefront is clad in plastic, brick-patterned siding. The building was historically two commercial buildings sharing a central wall. In the 1950s, this building was occupied by the Foodland grocery store and by the Laurel Radio and Electric Supply Company.³⁴

317 East Main Street. Smith's Chevron Service Station/ Auto Connection. c. 1944 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, concrete block, Western Commercial style, commercial building with an arched roof and false front. The front façade has an arched false-front, two garage doors, and two large, plate-glass windows. The original portion of the building is the rear (north) third, which was built some time before 1944. Soon after construction, the front portion was added. George Smith built and owned the Chevron service station located here, which was also a Hudson dealership and an American Motors dealership.³⁵

401 East Main Street. Angelos Brothers Block. 1923 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a two-story, frame, Western Commercial style, commercial and residential building with a flat roof. The building is clad in stucco on the second floor, with a prominent sign reading, in relief: "Angelos Bros, Blk 1923." The

³² Ibid; "New Three-Story Hotel," *Laurel Outlook*, 23 October 1929.

³³ "Yuletide Season Again at Hand."

³⁴ City Directories, 1954, 1960.

³⁵ Kenny Hageman, Conversation with Sara Adamson, December 2009.

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first floor was clad in brick veneer some time after 2000. In the years the building was built, Jim and Stamata Angelos owned it, and members of the Angelos family continued to own the building until 2005.³⁶

403, 405 East Main Street. Main Line Pizza. c. 1920 (1 contributing building)

This building is a two-story, concrete block, Western Commercial style, commercial and residential building with a flat roof. The building was likely remodeled c. 1947, and its front façade, clad in alternating bands of red and brown brick in a stack bond, reflects this period, not the original date of construction. The building has a central, glass-block window on the second floor, flanked by steel windows. The first floor entrance is flanked by large, plate-glass windows. Except for the replacement of two doors, the building appears as it did during the period of significance, based on photographic evidence.

407 East Main Street. Ford Service Building. c. 1947 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building is clad in stucco over brick, the southeastern corner is rounded, and the building has a large garage door on the front façade.

415 East Main Street. Laurel Outlook. c. 1948 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, concrete block, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof on the front of the building, and shallow-pitched, gable, metal roof on the rear. The front façade is clad in red and brown, wire-cut brick in a running bond with a stack-bond parapet and stack-bond bands above the windows.

101 West Main Street. Wold Building. 1910 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a two-story, Early Brick Commercial style, commercial and residential building with a flat roof. The majority of the building, built in 1910, is frame with brick veneer, but the northern bay, built between 1912 and 1920, is structural brick. This building is located at the northwest corner of Main Street and First Avenue and is the most prominent building visible when driving into Laurel from the south and the interstate. The building has a brick parapet with chimney-like projections at the corners and at the pilasters dividing the building's bays. The parapet has stucco panels in an alternating pattern of diamonds and rectangles, one of which on each street-front façade is imprinted with the word "Wold." The building has a brick cornice below the parapet, and sets of two and four, wood, one-over-one, double hung windows at the second floor. The ground floor storefront has been altered, like nearly every other building in Laurel. This building was built by Walter and Henrietta Westbrook and Nettie Held, and was known as the Westbrook Held Frame Building. It was originally clad in wood, lap siding, with a much simpler fenestration pattern. The Westbrook/Held partnership sold the building in 1919 to Ole and Anna Wold. Wold had founded the Funk-Wold Company, later the Wold-Kasner Company and the O. M. Wold company, and operated a general store and grain elevator further west on Main Street from 1909 until this building became his general store around 1916. Sometime before 1920, a brick addition was added to the north of the building, and by 1928, the original building had been clad in brick to match the addition. In the process, the fenestration patterns were changed to the much more complex pattern visible today.³⁷

³⁶ Schwartzkopf et al.

³⁷ "Westbrook Held Frame Building," *Laurel Outlook*, 8 June 1910.

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102 West Main Street. Occident Elevator Company. 1912 (1 contributing building, 1 contributing structure)

This elevator complex includes two masses of connected buildings, one grouped around the original Occident Elevator structure, and the other a long shed. The elevator complex includes the elevator, built in 1912, connected via a hyphen to a front-gable building, built between 1944 and 1960, and a shed-roof truck bay, part of the 1912 elevator. All of the elevator buildings are frame with metal siding. The shed is a long, concrete block building with a front-gable roof dating from between 1920 and 1944. The elevator itself was built by L. O. Hickok, a Minneapolis, Minnesota contractor, in 1912 for the Occident Elevator Company. It was the second of two elevators in this location; the first burned.³⁸

105, 107 West Main Street. Carlisle Jeweler/Reece Price Barber Shop. 1917-18 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, concrete block and brick, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The two halves of the building were built by separate owners in 1917 (western half) and 1918 (eastern half). The building has a stepped parapet with brick laid in chevron patterns, with decorative concrete and stucco blocks and panels. Herbert Carlisle, a jeweler, built the western half of the building, and Julius Zywert built the eastern half to house his meat market. Zywert's store was designed to match Carlisle's, which had been completed earlier. Each half of the building was originally divided into two retail spaces, or four total.³⁹

109 West Main Street. Laurel Meat Company. c. 1908 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, frame, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a brick façade and a front-gable, asphalt shingle roof. The building was originally Benjamin and Mary Lamb's Laurel Meat Company, and was a frame, front-gable building with a frame, false-front. Charles H. Barney and Frank O. Hartley, who owned the Barney Hartley market at 117 West Main Street, bought the building in the late 1930s, and probably built the brick façade, which matches that of the 117 West Main Street. The brick façade is yellow brick, with black glazed tile accents.

111 West Main Street. Owl Saloon/Jacobs & Jacobs/Laurel Bar. c. 1910 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a two-story, frame, Contemporary style, commercial building with a front-gable, asbestos shingle roof. The front façade was remodeled in the 1970s or 1980s to resemble a Swiss chalet. The building was originally the Owl Saloon, a front-gabled building with a false-front, a fabric awning, glass store-front windows and a recessed entrance. In later years, it was Jacobs & Jacobs, a cigar store and soda fountain. By the 1940s, it was the Laurel Bar.

113 West Main Street. Harold's Beer Mug. c. 1954 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a concrete block, Contemporary style, commercial building with a front-gable, asphalt shingle roof. The front of the building is one story, and the rear is two. The front façade was reclad in modern materials (vertical-grooved plywood siding, red brick veneer) and given a full-width, shed-roof canopy in the 1980s. The building was owned by Harold Bender from 1954 to 1981, and was a bar called "Harold's Beer Mug."

³⁸ "Occident Elevator Destroyed by Fire," *Laurel Outlook*, 27 November 1912; "Occident Elevator to Be Rebuilt," *Laurel Outlook*, 11 December 1912; "Start Work on Elevator," *Laurel Outlook*, 3 June 1912.

³⁹ "Brick Building on Main Street," *Laurel Outlook*, 21 March 1917; "Many New Buildings During Past Year Mark Rapid Growth of Laurel," *Laurel Outlook*, 12 December 1912.

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117 West Main Street. Barney Hartley Market/Laurel Trading Company/King Koin. c. 1936 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a one-story, brick, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building's front façade is clad in yellow brick, with glazed, black tile accents and a crenellated parapet. The building retains most of its historic elements, including its clerestory windows and one historic entry door. This building housed the Barney Hartley Market in the 1930s and 1940s. The wall between this building and 119 West Main Street was later perforated and this building became part of the Laurel Trading Company retail space.

119 West Main Street. Laurel Trading Company. 1906 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a one-story, frame, Boomtown/False-front style, commercial building with a front-gable, standing seam metal roof and basement. The building was originally clad in wood, lap siding, over which a stucco covering was applied within the period of significance. While this building is in poor condition, it retains its historic clerestory windows, entrance door, advertising murals and signage, and its interior shelving and pressed tin ceiling. One of the few remaining early, frame, false-front buildings in Laurel, it is also one of the oldest extant buildings in the town. The Laurel Trading Company was built by Charles L. Morris, George Settergren, and Bert George Brockway in 1906, and consisted of a thirty by eighty-foot store, with a thirty by fifty-eight-foot rear warehouse. The store sold hardware and furniture, and Settergren offered undertaking services out of this location.⁴⁰

201 West Main Street. Sherrow Brothers Litening Station. c. 1948 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a one-story, frame, Moderne style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building is clad in porcelain enamel tile. It has an asymmetrical front façade, with a rounded corner and canopy, and curved store windows below. The building has two garage doors, and a small addition to the west added c. 1970. This service station is located on the site of the Malcom Hotel, one of the earliest Laurel businesses, and one that moved from the original townsite to this location in 1889. The hotel building burned in 1919. By 1935, the Sherrow Brothers Litening Station (a quaint spelling of "lightening") was located here, a service station matching the Conoco formerly at the southeast corner of Main Street and First Avenue, also owned by the Sherrows. Some time after 1944, that service station was replaced by this one.⁴¹

207 West Main Street. F. J. Valek, General Merchant. 1908 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick, Western Commercial style, commercial building clad in stucco and cementitious artificial stone, with a flat roof. This building was constructed in 1908 by H. A. Noyes and E. D. Burla on the site of a disastrous 1907 fire. It was the easternmost bay of a larger commercial block with four other commercial spaces. F. J. Valek's general store, later located at 201 East Main Street, was the original business in this location. In 1919, another fire swept this block, burning the Malcom Hotel to the east, and the rest of this building, leaving only this portion. The artificial stone façade was installed in 1971.⁴²

⁴⁰ "\$65,450 Has Been Spent on New Buildings in the Past 9 Months," *Laurel Sentinel*, 27 December 1906; "A \$46,000 Blaze," *Laurel Sentinel*, 17 September 1907; "Laurel Trading Co. In New Store," *Laurel Outlook*, 30 November 1906; "New Store Building for Laurel Trading Company," *Laurel Outlook*, 5 October 1906.

⁴¹ "Fire Sweeps Half Block."

⁴² Greg Nelson, conversation with Sara Adamson, January 2010; Ibid; "New Brick Building on Front Street," *Laurel Outlook*, 26 March 1908.

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213 West Main Street. Roysdon Furniture. c. 1915/c. 1930 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick and concrete block, International Style, commercial building with a flat roof. It was originally two separate buildings, a c. 1915 western half and a c. 1930 eastern half, which were combined by removing the shared wall, and by putting a modern storefront (c. 1952) across the two buildings. The storefront is an asymmetrical, mid-century modern design of Roman brick and corrugated fiberglass with a flat, metal canopy. From historic photographs, before it was modified, the western building was identical to the brick-fronted commercial building next door at 215 West Main Street. The eastern building was originally a brick-front commercial building with three retail spaces. Morris O. and Lucy Roysdon, whose furniture business had been located here since 1937, acquired both buildings in 1940 and 1941. The Roysdon family owned the store until the 1980s.⁴³

215 West Main Street. J. M. Sawyer Company. c. 1915 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The building has a simple façade with a corbelled parapet with two rows of cream-colored brick dentils. The front entrance is recessed and flanked by large store-front windows. The entryway retains its historic door, transom, and ceiling. The building was occupied by J. M. Sawyer's general store from around 1920 to around 1950.⁴⁴

217, 219, 221 West Main Street. Westbrook Held Brick Block/Lennox Hotel/Wold Agricultural Implements Building. 1908 (1 contributing or individually eligible building)

This building is a two-story, brick, Western Commercial style, commercial and residential building with a flat roof and a partial basement. It was built by Walter Westbrook and his business partner Nettie B. Held in 1908 after a catastrophic fire destroyed Westbrook's frame mercantile store on this lot. This building housed Westbrook's new general store, and a thirty-two room hotel on the second floor. O. M. Wold's general store was located in the ground floor spaces from 1909-1916, and his agricultural implement business was later located here from around 1925 on, and Wold and his descendants owned the building from 1934 through 2006.⁴⁵

220 West Main Street. Funk-Wold/J. W. Denio/Hageman Elevator. c. 1911-1980. (1 noncontributing building, 3 noncontributing structures)

This elevator complex consists of a front, metal-clad, one-story building with a gable roof dating mostly to c. 1980, with a small c. 1950 office wing; a 1944 grain elevator with attached 1944 feed warehouse, both metal-clad with pitched roofs; a 1941, metal-clad, gable-roofed grain elevator, which was doubled in height and capacity in 1969, with an attached c. 1970 cylindrical grain silo; and two c. 1911 warehouses, which were joined together and partially demolished c. 1970. Walter Westbrook built the first elevator on this property in 1909. It was replaced in 1911 by an elevator built by J. W. Lahart from North Dakota, and owned by the Funk-Wold Company, Ole Wold's business. The only remaining buildings from this era are the two connected c. 1911 warehouses. In 1917, Wold sold the elevator to the Denio-Barr Milling and Grain Company (later J. W. Denio Milling Company). From 1929 to 1938, the elevator belonged to the Brown Milling

⁴³ Dan Roysdon, conversation with Sara Adamson, January 2010; "Fire Sweeps Half Block."

⁴⁴ City Directories, 1919, 1925, 1947, 1954.

⁴⁵ City Directories 1907, 1919, 1925; "Building New Business Blocks," *Laurel Outlook*, 17 September 1908; "Funk-Wold Company," *Laurel Outlook*, 21 July 1909; "To Increase Size of Storeroom," *Laurel Outlook*, 26 May 1915.

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Company, then sold to Barney "B. B." Hageman. Hageman demolished the 1911 elevator, built a 20,000 bushel elevator in 1941, and built the western elevator and feed warehouse in 1944. He also built the front office building. Hageman's son Kenny Hageman enlarged the 1941 elevator in 1969, and installed the grain silo, altering the 1911 warehouses in the process.⁴⁶

301 West Main Street. Laurel State Bank/ Laird Apartments. 1906 (1 contributing building)

This building is a two-story, Early Brick Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof and a basement. The building has a rusticated stone foundation with beaded mortar joints at the two street-front façades (east and south). This building was constructed in 1906 by Walter Westbrook at a cost of \$15,000 to house the newly founded Laurel State Bank and to be the base of operations for Westbrook's conglomerate of real estate companies (the Laurel Real Estate, Loan, and Investment Company, and the Laurel Realty Company). The first brick building in Laurel, it survived a catastrophic fire in 1907, leaving it with only scorched trim paint and cracked windows. It likely influenced the popularity of brick construction in the years following the fire; however, it was gutted by another, interior fire in 1910. In addition to the bank, the building originally housed a retail space fronting Main Street, occupied by Chapple's Drugstore, and professional office space on the second floor. In 1919, the Laurel State Bank moved to new quarters at 12 First Avenue. C. W. and Olive Laird owned the building briefly at the end of the 1920s, and converted it to an apartment building. In the conversion, the building was clad in stucco and the front retail space was removed and reconfigured; the stucco was likely needed to cover the mismatched brick. Because of its association with Walter Westbrook's banking and real estate companies, which were involved with the sale or financing of nearly every real estate transaction from 1906 through the 1920s, this building, more than any other in Laurel, is associated with Laurel's boom and development.⁴⁷

305 West Main Street. Yellowstone Garage. c. 1919 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, brick and concrete block, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. The front façade has a flat parapet and corbelled brick cornice below. The most distinctive feature of the building is the arcade of wide, arched openings that span the full width of the building's front; these were historically rectangular garage door openings that were infilled with brick arches some time after the mid-1970s. Several frame buildings stood on this lot until some time before c. 1919, when this building was constructed as the Yellowstone Garage. It was later Sidney O. Harris Automobiles, Grand Garage, and Greening Chevrolet.⁴⁸

309 West Main Street. Erb, Harper, and Rigney Company/ Rebekahs. c. 1910 (1 noncontributing building)

This building is a one-story, concrete block, Western Commercial style, commercial building with a flat roof. Very little of the front façade reflects its historic appearance. The building was constructed by Frank Platz and Frank Weatherford, concrete contractors who also built 16 Second Avenue, and the Methodist Church. Their specialty was cement block, and they had distinctive, rusticated molds. The pilasters at the corners of the front façade of this building are out of this

⁴⁶ Danny Hageman, conversation with Sara Adamson, December 2009; "An Elevator for Laurel," *Laurel Outlook*, 13 September 1911; "Elevator Has Changed Hands," *Laurel Outlook*, 20 September 1911.

⁴⁷ "A \$46,000 Blaze."; "Laurel State Bank Burned," *Laurel Outlook*, 1 December 1910; "Laurel State Bank Nearly Complete," *Laurel Outlook*, 28 September 1906; "Laurel's Leading Business Men and Enterprises," *The Billings Times*, March 23, 1911; "Laurel's Strong Banks a Mark of Prosperity."; "Why It Is to Your Advantage to Invest in Laurel?."

⁴⁸ City Directories, 1925, 1954, 1957.

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material. The storefront has been entirely infilled with brick, however, and no longer communicates the building's history as a store. The building originally housed the Erb, Harper, and Rigney Company, a implement dealership owned by Abraham Erb, George Harper, and Thomas Rigney.

310 West Main Street. Laurel Lumber Company/ T. R. Holmes Lumber Company Office. c. 1910 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, frame, Craftsman style, residential building with an asphalt-shingle, hipped roof. The building has exposed rafter tails, a brick chimney, and is clad in wood, lapped siding, and wood shingles. Originally part of a larger complex of lumber-yard structures, this is the only remaining building of the complex. Originally the Laurel Lumber Company, owned by James Scilley, and later by Thomas R. Holmes. The lumber yard operated until the 1940s, when the Lohof Motel was constructed on the property.

313 West Main Street. Laurel Hall Company/FOE. c. 1910/c. 1950 (1 contributing building)

This building is a one-story, frame, Mission/Pueblo Revival style, commercial building clad in stucco, and with a front-gable, metal roof. The c. 1950 addition has a flat roof. The original, c.1910 portion of the building has a distinctive, Mission-style, arched false-front with a vented "belfry" opening. This building has been a public hall for most of its history. It was owned by 1908 by the Laurel Hall Company, which sold it to Susan Malcom, the proprietor of the Malcom Hotel. During her ownership, it was known as Malcom Hall, and it was later called the LL Club, under Mrs. L. A. Lewis's ownership. During the Great Depression, the kitchen in the building was used as a cannery, employing those on relief to can food for others on relief. By 1947, the Laurel Eagles owned the building, and the Aerie held regular meetings here. The adjacent building was annexed to the hall in 1976.⁴⁹

320 West Main Street. Lohof Motel. 1946 (1 contributing building, 1 contributing object)

This building is a L-shaped, frame, one-story, Contemporary style, motel building with a flat roof. The building is clad in vertical metal siding, stucco, and artificial cementitious stone. The inside of the L is lined with guest room doors and windows, interspersed with garage door openings. A distinctive characteristic of this motel was that some guest rooms had garages. The Lohof Motel was built in 1946, by William and Henry Lohof, Billings contractors. The motel's classic sign, which stands by the street on a small patch of clipped lawn, is a significant, mid-century modern, roadside sign.

410 West Main Street. Baker's Service Station/Gibson Service Station/Dean Fausnaugh. c. 1938/c. 1950 (1 contributing building, 1 noncontributing building)

This property consists of a concrete block service station with an attached, frame house, and a detached, non-historic, metal storage building. The service station was built c. 1950, and is a typical, post-war service station with minimal architectural detailing. The house was built c. 1938 and is a one-story, frame, Cross-Gable style, residential building clad in stucco with an asphalt shingle roof. The business was originally W. Oscar Baker's service station, which operated out of a building on this lot that is no longer extant. It was then owned by Roy Gibson, from 1937 to 1949, and then by Gibson's son-in-law, David Johnston.

⁴⁹ "Cannery Putting up Huge Amounts of Canned Goods," *Laurel Outlook*, 29 August 1934; "Lodge Provides Fine Entertainment," *Laurel Outlook*, 19 April 1911.

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Building List

C – Contributing
IC – Contributing or Individually Eligible
NC – Noncontributing

SITS #	Street Name	Historic or Common Name	Year Built	Style	NR Status
24YL1734	5, 7, 9 1st Ave	Citizen's National Bank Rear Building	c. 1910	Early Brick Commercial	C
24YL1735	11, 13 1st Ave	Strand Theatre Site/Park	c. 1919/ 2000	Other	NC
24YL1736	12 1st Ave	Yellowstone State Bank/Sande Pharmacy	1919	Beaux Arts/Neoclassical	C
24YL1737	16, 16-1/2 1st Ave	Peggy's Style Shop/Don's Barber Shop	c. 1920	Early Brick Commercial	C
24YL1738	18, 18-1/2 1st Ave	Laird's Electrical Supply/Dutch Mill Café	c. 1938	Western Commercial	C
24YL1739	19 1st Ave	Pfaff Chiropractic/State Farm	c. 1930	Brutalist	NC
24YL1740	206 1st Ave	Scott's Dry Cleaning and Laundry	c. 1950	Western Commercial	C
24YL1741	208 1st Ave	John and Tena Berkheimer House/ Dr. Nottingham, DDS	c. 1907/ 1947	Side Gable/Western Commercial	C, C, NC
24YL1742	210, 212 1st Ave	Donald Nottingham, DDS/ Bundy Plumbing and Heating	c. 1952	Late Modern	C
24YL1743	16 2nd Ave	Laurel Creamery	c. 1910	Western Commercial	IC
24YL1744	20 2nd Ave	Grace Bible Church	c. 1920	Craftsman	NC
24YL1745	12 3rd Ave	Laurel Outlook Offices/Benjamin Price Offices/Laurel Insurance	c. 1916/ c. 1950	Other Contemporary	C, C, C
24YL1747	101 W 1st St	Ashley Home	c. 1946	International Style	IC
24YL1748	109 W 1st St	US Post Office/Grace Bible Church Youth Annex	c. 1955	Other Contemporary	C
24YL1749	115 W 1st St	City Hall	1952-55	Western Commercial	IC
24YL1750	119 W 1st St	Laurel Library/City Hall West	c. 1915/ 1937/1951	Mission/Spanish Revival	C
24YL1752	6 Montana Ave	Hageter Building/Marshall Apts	1919	Western Commercial	IC
24YL1753	9 Montana Ave	Montgomery's Newsstand	c. 1910	Boomtown False-front	C
24YL1754	11 Montana Ave	Orchid Cleaners	c. 1950	Other Contemporary	C
24YL1755	12 Montana Ave	Mountain States Telephone	c. 1955	International Style	IC
24YL1756	15 Montana Ave	Laurel Family Dentistry	1959	Other Contemporary	C
24YL1757	13 Pennsylvania Ave	Eaton's Paint Store	c. 1915	Boomtown False-front	IC
24YL1758	19 Pennsylvania Ave	Hurzler Hotel	1920	Western Commercial	C, C
24YL1759	101 E Main St	Citizens National Bank	1912	Early Brick Commercial	C
24YL1760	103 E Main St	McCauley-Spencer Block	1917	Western Commercial	IC
24YL1761	105 E Main St	Laurel Café/Elite Salon	c. 1908	Western Commercial	NC
24YL1762	107 E Main St	Safeway/EFX Photography	1908	Western Commercial	NC
24YL1763	108 E Main St	Chamber of Commerce and Park	1938	Log Cabin	C
24YL1764	109 E Main St	City Club Inn/Cheerio Cocktail Lounge	c. 1930	Western Commercial	C
24YL1765	111 E Main St	Heinz Drugstore/Gene's Pharmacy	1919	Western Commercial	IC
24YL1766	113 E Main St	Heinz and Kennedy/Maurer Chiropractic	1919	Western Commercial	IC
24YL1767	115 E Main St	Elizabeth's Garden	c. 1908	Boomtown False-front	C
24YL1768	117, 117½ E Main St	Board of Trade Bar	c. 1908	Boomtown False-front	C
24YL1769	201 E Main St	F. J. Valek General Store/Valek Apartments	1908	Boomtown False-front	C
24YL1770	203 E Main St	Owl Café	c. 1915/ c. 1958	Boomtown False-front	C

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SITS #	Street Name	Historic or Common Name	Year Built	Style	NR Status
24YL1771	209 E Main St	Sonny O'Day's	c. 1925	Western Commercial	IC
24YL1772	215 E Main St	Laurel Liquor	1999	Other Contemporary	NC
24YL1773	219 E Main St	Standard Oil Station/Twistees	c. 1950	Other Contemporary	NC
24YL1774	301 E Main St	New Yellowstone Hotel	c. 1929	Western Commercial	C
24YL1776	305 E Main St	Laurel Auto and Supply Co./ Palace Bowling Alley	c. 1916/ c. 1955	Western Commercial	C
24YL1777	309 E Main St	Carquest/Foodland/Laurel Radio and Electric Supply Company	c. 1948	Western Commercial	NC
24YL1778	317 E Main St	Smith's Chevron Service Station/ Auto Connection	c. 1944	Western Commercial	C
24YL1779	401 E Main St	Angelos Bros Block	1923	Western Commercial	NC
24YL1780	403, 405 E Main St	Main Line Pizza	c. 1920	Western Commercial	C
24YL1781	407 E Main St	Ford Service Building	c. 1947	Western Commercial	C
24YL1782	415 E Main St	Laurel Outlook	c. 1948	Western Commercial	C
24YL1576	101 W Main St	Wold Bldg	1910	Early Brick Commercial	IC
24YL1783	102 W Main St	Occident Elevator Company	1912- 1960	Other	C, C
24YL1784	105, 107 W Main St	Carlisle Jeweler/Reece Price Barber Shop	1917- 1918	Western Commercial	C
24YL1785	109 W Main St	Laurel Meat Company/Laurel Hearing Aid	1908	Western Commercial	C
24YL1786	111 W Main St	Owl Saloon/Jacobs & Jacobs/Laurel Bar	c. 1910	Other Contemporary	NC
24YL1787	113 W Main St	Harold's Beer Mug	c. 1954	Other Contemporary	NC
24YL1788	117 W Main St	Barney Hartley Market/Laurel Trading Company/King Koin	c. 1936	Western Commercial	IC
25YL1577	119 W Main St	Laurel Trading Company	1906	Boomtown False-front	IC
24YL1789	201 W Main St	Sherrow Brothers Litening Station	c. 1948	Moderne	IC
24YL1790	207 W Main St	F. J. Valek, General Merchant	1908	Western Commercial	NC
24YL1791	213 W Main St	Roysdon Furniture	c. 1915/ c. 1930	International Style	C
24YL1578	215 W Main St	J.M. Sawyer Company	c. 1915	Western Commercial	C
24YL1579	217, 219, 221 W Main St	Westbrook Held Brick Block/Lennox Hotel/Wold Agricultural Implements Building	1908	Early Brick Commercial	IC
24YL1792	220 W Main St	Funk-Wold /J. W. Denio/Hageman Elevator	c. 1911- 1980	Other	NC, NC, NC, NC
24YL1793	301 W Main St	Laurel State Bank/Laird Apartments	1906	Early Brick Commercial	C
24YL1794	305 W Main St	Yellowstone Garage	c. 1919	Western Commercial	C
24YL1795	309 W Main St	Erb, Harper, and Rigney Company /Rebekahs	c. 1910	Western Commercial	NC
24YL1796	310 W Main St	Laurel/T. R. Holmes Lumber Company Office	c. 1910	Craftsman	C
24YL1797	313 W Main St	Laurel Hall Company/FOE	c. 1910/ 1950	Mission/Pueblo Revival	C
24YL1798	320 W Main St	Lohof Motel	1946	Other Contemporary	C, C
24YL1799	410 W Main St	Baker's Service Station/Gibson Service Station/Dean Fausnaugh	c. 1938/ c. 1950	Late Modern	C, NC

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Summary

The Laurel Downtown Historic District is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, Laurel's development as the trade and shipping center of a rich agricultural area and as a railroad town are associated with the broad patterns of agricultural development in the West, the history of commerce in small Western towns, and the creation of railroad towns by the major transcontinental railroad companies, part of the larger history of transportation and industry in the West. The district is also eligible under Criterion C as a collection of commercial architecture dating from 1906-1960. The district is significant at a local level in the areas of Architecture, Commerce, Agriculture, Industry, and Transportation.

The period of significance for the district begins in 1906, the construction date of the oldest buildings in the district and the year the Northern Pacific, Great Northern, and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroads made their junction in Laurel—the main impetus behind Laurel's growth and prosperity. The period of significance ends in 1960, fifty years before the date of this nomination. Significant dates are 1906, the year Laurel became a major railroad junction, and 1908, the year the city was incorporated.

Areas of Significance: Architecture, Commerce, Agriculture, Industry, and Transportation

Laurel's history, embodied in its downtown commercial area, is a vivid illustration of the role of industry in shaping communities. Agriculture was Laurel's first industry, and the small village began as a trade and shipping center supporting the farmers on the river valley lands surrounding it. The district contains a number of resources associated with Laurel's agricultural history, such as grain elevators and buildings that were once farm implement dealerships. The railroad was the second and most significant industry to shape Laurel, and the force that catapulted the town from a small collection of frame, false-front businesses to a booming town with a stable population, substantial brick business blocks, and established residential neighborhoods. The railroad instigated the movement of the entire town to its location along the tracks—a townsite platted by a company affiliated with the Rocky Fork Railroad. Once the rail yards were constructed and Laurel became an important rail junction, the rail industry provided Laurel with a large population of rail workers and the assurance of a strong future economy. With the economy and population to support commerce, Laurel's downtown business area thrived, and the district, a collection of commercial buildings, reflects patterns of commercial development common to many Western towns. The railroad industry also linked the town to the history of transportation in the West, namely the history of transcontinental railroads and their impact on the nation's trade and economy. The addition of a third industry, oil refining, just at the brink of the nation's Great Depression, buffered Laurel's economy from the worst effects of the downturn.

The resources within the commercial area reflect not only the town's history and association with the broad themes of Agriculture, Industry, Commerce, and Transportation, but are also a significant collection of commercial architecture, mostly one- and two-story storefronts with zero setbacks, recessed entries, and parallel patterns of storefront windows. Architectural styles range from Western False-Front to Beaux-Arts Neoclassical, with most buildings of a Western Brick Commercial style. The architecture reflects Laurel's transition from a sleepy railroad town that initially failed to prosper, to a burgeoning industrial and transportation center with an assured future. The early frame, false-fronts reflect Laurel's initial boom, while the more permanent, brick buildings reflect Laurel's steady growth and the optimism for its future. The district also contains excellent examples of post-war buildings in mid-century modern styles.

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Historic Context

The Laurel Vicinity Prior to Euro-American Settlement (Prehistory-1877)

The earliest prehistoric evidence of man's presence in the Yellowstone Basin dates to 13,000 years ago, when Stone Age hunters used atlatls to hunt mammoths and giant bison. By 8,000 years ago, the hunting culture in the Yellowstone Basin had evolved to communal hunting, using corrals and buffalo jumps. Before approximately 1600, the only tribes in Montana were the Plateau Indians; however, the Crows, who migrated from the plains of Canada, may have arrived in the Yellowstone Basin as early as the mid-sixteenth century. By the late eighteenth century, when guns and horses had become a ubiquitous and essential element in Native culture, a Plains Indian culture based on bison hunting had been established in areas of the West like the Yellowstone Basin. The long tradition of seasonal travel had continued, although with horses the range and ease of travel had increased. By 1800, these Plains Indians dominated the lands east of the Rockies in Montana, and had driven the Plateau Indians, such as the Salish and Kootenai, from their seasonal buffalo hunting grounds. By the time the first European explorers arrived, the Crows were the principle tribe in the Yellowstone Basin. The Crow Tribe was divided by that time into two groups: the River Crows, who lived and hunted north of the Yellowstone River, and the Mountain Crows, who ranged in the mountains south of the Yellowstone River.⁵⁰

The first Euro-American expedition into the Yellowstone Basin was probably lead by Pierre Gualtier de Varennes de la Verendyre and his two sons, who likely only got as far west as the Bighorn River on their 1742 expedition. In 1805, Francois Antoine Larocque lead a second expedition to explore the valley, travelling with members of the Crow Tribe. The next year, in July 1806, on their return journey, Captain William Clark and his expedition floated down the Yellowstone River from Livingston in crude canoes. They camped at the mouth of the Clark's Fork, near the present site of Laurel, and noted it made a likely spot for a trading post.

Fur trappers followed over the next several decades. Then, in 1859 a government-sponsored surveying expedition, lead by Captain F. W. Reynolds, lieutenant Henry E. Maynadier, and guided by trapper Jim Bridger, spent two summers exploring the Yellowstone Basin, with the goal of mapping the best transportation routes. Reynolds wrote that the Yellowstone Valley "affords peculiar facilities for a railroad." The expedition also discovered the Yellowstone River could be navigated by steamboat, which it was, briefly, from the mid 1870s to early 1880s, but not as far upstream as Laurel.⁵¹

During the Montana gold rush of the 1860s, gold had been discovered at the Clarks Fork mouth, and gold prospectors passed through the Laurel area for a brief period, some in Mackinaw boats that brought miners and their goods east on the Yellowstone River from Livingston.⁵²

⁵⁰ Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1991), 9-17; Spritzer, 33.

⁵¹ Johnston, 2-3; "National Park Service: Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail"; Spritzer, 333-336; "The City of Laurel".

⁵² Johnston, 2-3.

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Chief Joseph led the Nez Perce over the Yellowstone River near Laurel in 1877 in their retreat to Canada, heading north through Canyon Creek approximately six miles north of Laurel. Col. Sam Sturgis and his cavalry caught up with the tribe there, and a battle ensued. The Nez Perce escaped the cavalry to continue on their flight.⁵³

Euro-American Settlement and Agricultural Development in the Laurel Area (1877-c. 1920)

Thirteen years after the Montana Territory was created, the first Euro-American settlement in the Laurel area was a stage stop established in 1877, a few miles north of the mouth of Canyon Creek, east of Laurel. White settlement in the immediate Laurel area began in 1879, closely followed by the construction of the Northern Pacific Railroad in the Yellowstone Basin, which was started in 1882 and completed in 1883. The railroad was the first of three transcontinental lines, and it established division points at 100-mile intervals, most of which became booming, rail-shipping centers, such as Billings, Livingston, Glendive, and Forsyth. The town of Laurel, first named Carlton, was established in 1882 along the newly-laid tracks, and was originally located, by different accounts, from one-half to two-and-a-half miles west of the current city limits. It was not a division point originally.⁵⁴

The *Northern Pacific Guidebook* from 1883 notes Carlton's existence in a single sentence: "Passing the unimportant station of Carlton eighteen miles west of Billings, the next stopping place is at Park City." The town of Carlton had two saloons, two stores, a hotel, and a blacksmith shop. A pontoon ferry, to cross the Yellowstone River, was built in 1885 near the present site of the railroad bridge on the Yellowstone River, where the braided river contracts into a single channel. It operated until a bridge two and a half miles west was built in 1889 (no longer extant).⁵⁵

Carlton was essentially the seat of an agricultural area in its early years. The land surrounding the town was fertile river valley land, and by the 1890s, much of it was irrigated. The Big Ditch, built by the Montana Land and Improvement Company, was completed by 1883, and runs north of Laurel. The Clarks Fork Ditch, owned by Laurel residents L. A. Nutting, L. Nutting, and William Bode, was built in 1891, and runs between Laurel and the Yellowstone River, irrigating the low-lying lands north of the river.⁵⁶ Laurel was eventually known for the production of grains, fruits, and, most notably, sugar beets, which were processed in nearby Billings.⁵⁷

Between 1883 and 1889, the name of the town changed from Carlton to Laurel. According to local lore, the change might have been done by a railroad official from North Carolina, who named it after the plant native to his state.⁵⁸

⁵³ Ibid; "National Park Service: Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail"; Spritzer, 356; "The City of Laurel".

⁵⁴ Easton and Eaton, 3; Johnston, 2-6; Spritzer, 7, 335.

⁵⁵ Easton and Eaton; Johnston, 3-5.

⁵⁶ Johnston, 34-35.

⁵⁷ "Laurel's Leading Business Men and Enterprises."

⁵⁸ It is also possible that Sam Hauser, who platted a large townsite in 1889 on land purchased two years earlier, south of the railroad tracks and one mile west of present-day Laurel, may have named the town Laurel.

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1900 to 1920 were the years of the homestead boom in Montana, when thousands of families settled in eastern Montana intending to take advantage of the relatively new dryland farming techniques, increasing Montana's farmland over that period by over 2,300 percent. Homesteaders were lured by the latest homestead laws, which had become more liberal, and local Chambers of Commerce, which promoted homesteading in their areas. In fact, the subject of the speech at the Laurel Chamber of Commerce's first annual banquet in 1912 was dry farming. That spring, the Billings records office saw an increase in filings. In 1913, the *Laurel Outlook* reported that Montana had more homestead claims than any other state, and by 1915, published the news that one third of the country's homestead applications were in Montana.⁵⁹ The railroad companies also promoted homesteading through propaganda campaigns promoting homesteading near their established townsites. The agricultural lands around Laurel were developed primarily during this period, and the farming population helped support the burgeoning town as their trade and shipping center. The farmers met with quick success thanks to several years of heavy rainfall, and inflated World War I wheat prices. In 1919, the first in a string of dry seasons hit Montana, and by 1925, two thirds of the state's homesteaders had left. The agricultural depression also caused fifty percent of Montana's banks to fail.⁶⁰

A Western legend, "Calamity Jane" Cannary, is associated with Laurel in these early, settlement years. Cannary came to Laurel around 1882, after the years she was most associated with the outlaws of Deadwood, South Dakota and Wild Bill Hickok. She had a dug-out shelter near the Canyon Creek Battleground, where she continued as a horse thief and heavy drinker, also cooking for passengers at the nearby stage stop and cutting and selling cedar fence posts to recent area settlers. She was a regular presence at Laurel saloons, and was famous locally for her all-night poker games. By local accounts, she came and went from her Canyon Creek home until 1901; however, it is more likely she left by 1893, when she joined Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show.⁶¹

In 1906, when the news had broken that Laurel was to be an important rail-shipping town, the *Laurel Sentinel* published an editorial entitled "Laurel Needs an Elevator." It wasn't until 1909 that Laurel businessman Walter Westbrook built a 5,000 bushel elevator at 220 West Main Street (no longer extant), which was replaced in 1911 by an elevator owned by the Funk-Wold Companies.⁶² The second elevator to be built in Laurel, at 102 West Main Street, was built in 1912 by the Occident Elevator Company, a Minneapolis, Minnesota company that had built seventeen other elevators in Montana by

CE Charles A. Dewar, "Map of the Town of East Laurel, Yellowstone County, Montana," (1899); Johnston, 3-5, 89-99; Eugene B. Sampson, "Map of Laurel Realty Subdivision," (1906); Spritzer, 335-36; Carroll Van West, *Capitalism on the Frontier: Billings and the Yellowstone Valley in the Nineteenth Century* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska, 1993), 172-78.

⁵⁹ The *Laurel Outlook* in these years was mainly a vehicle for town boosterism, and these facts have not been confirmed.

⁶⁰ "File on Millions of Acres," *Laurel Outlook*, 11 February 1914; "Laurel Chamber of Commerce First Annual Banquet," *Laurel Outlook*, 17 January 1912; "Many Are Filing on Land," *Laurel Outlook*, 10 April 1912; "Population Is Increasing," *Laurel Outlook*, 5 November 1913; Spritzer, 9.

⁶¹ "Calamity Jane", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calamity_Jane (accessed January 2010); Johnston, 43-45.

⁶² Axline, John. "Wold Building: 24YL1576." Montana Historical and Architectural Inventory, 29 August 2003; Hageman; "An Elevator for Laurel."; "Elevator Has Changed Hands."; Kooistra-Manning; "Laurel Needs an Elevator," *Laurel Sentinel*, 9 November 1906.

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that year. This elevator burned to the ground within months, and a replacement was built immediately by the contractor for the original elevator, L. O. Hickok, also from Minneapolis. The complex originally was comprised of the elevator, a flour and grain warehouse, and a series of sheds and warehouses. The Peavy Company bought the elevator from Occident in 1950, and operated it until the 1970s.⁶³

Laurel became an important shipping center for Montana's agricultural products, but it continued to be the seat of a productive agricultural area. One of the largest workforces in local agriculture was the population of German immigrants from the Volga region of Russia, who worked in the sugar beet fields. The German population in Russia was established under Catherine II and Alexander I, in the second half of the eighteenth, and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Catherine II opened Russia to immigrants, and wanted the fertile river bottoms around the Volga farmed by capable, German farmers. Germans who had been persecuted in Germany for religious differences, many of them pacifist Mennonites, moved to the Volga where they had more freedom and were granted immunity from military service as non-native Russians. What had been an idyllic, rural life for the Germans in Russia ended in 1874, when the German population began to be taxed severely, and were required to perform military service. Despite concessions that recognized the Mennonites' pacifist beliefs, the German population began to leave Russia for the Americas. Many moved to the western plains states, including Nebraska, Kansas, North Dakota, and South Dakota, as well as to Canada. Concurrently, American sugar companies were importing laborers to work in the sugar beet fields. Many of the Germans in Russia, who raised sugar beets in Russia to make a kind of sugar syrup traditional to the area, took the opportunity to emigrate.

The *Laurel Sentinel* reported in May of 1909 that two rail cars had arrived, coming from Lincoln, Nebraska carrying 250 men of Russian-German descent to harvest the beet crops; seventy-five of the men were assigned to Laurel. The previous year more than seventy-five had come for the harvest, but so many had stayed in Laurel over the winter, the number in 1909 was smaller. The *Sentinel* reported, "Most of these families come with the intention of remaining, and many of them will eventually own homes of their own."

The German immigrants in Laurel settled in the southwest neighborhood of Laurel, which became known as Germantown. The German men worked in the beet fields during the growing season, and the women contributed to the family income by taking in laundry. Once the rail yards became the major employer in Laurel, many of the German men worked for the Northern Pacific, and the women and children continued in the beet fields. The immigrants eventually established themselves financially by first renting and eventually buying farms, or by working for the railroad, and many of the long-standing farming families in Laurel were of German descent, from Russia. Many of the downtown businesses were owned and operated by descendants of these immigrants, and the ownership histories of the resources in the district reflect the extent to which these families were integral to the town's history.⁶⁴

⁶³ City Directory, 1960; "Occident Elevator Destroyed by Fire."; "Occident Elevator to Be Rebuilt."; "Start Work on Elevator."

⁶⁴ "Beet Workers Have Arrived," *Laurel Sentinel*, 6 May 1909; "Germans from Russia", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germans_from_Russia (accessed November 15, 2009); Howard and Rose Mary Guenther, "Echoes Project: Interview by Kevin Kooistra-Manning," (Billings, MT: Western Heritage Center, 2008); Johnston, 27-28, 89-99; Spritzer, 355-356.

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The Railroad, Laurel's Commercial and Industrial Boom (1889-1930s)

In Carlton/Laurel's early years, Billings was the major railroad town in the vicinity, and neighboring Park City, less than ten miles to the west, outshone Laurel in size and population. Carlton/Laurel was a town along the Northern Pacific line, but it was not a true railroad town, defined as a town established by a railroad company or an affiliate as part of the company's "strategy to populate and control the territory along its line." In 1889, the same year Montana attained statehood, the Rocky Fork Railroad, the branch that runs from the Northern Pacific line at Laurel south to Red Lodge, was completed. The same year, the Rocky Fork Town and Electric Company, a railroad company affiliate, platted a new Laurel townsite, and the town residents moved themselves, their houses, and businesses from the original townsite east to the new townsite, located at the junction of the two railroads. Several of the frame structures that were moved from the original town of Carlton, including the Malcom Hotel, did survive through the first few decades of the twentieth century, but none are extant today.

This new Laurel townsite was a true railroad town—established by a townsite company that was an affiliate of the Rocky Fork Railroad Company to encourage settlement and promote business in a trade-center located at a point on the railroad determined by the railroad companies. The establishment of these railroad towns reached its peak in the Western states after the transcontinental lines had been completed, and most, like Laurel, were established at the intersections of branches and secondary lines.

These railroad towns were not always instant successes; however, townsite companies usually stayed invested in communities until they had exhausted the possibilities for profit, and turned the town over to its residents when the town incorporated. Laurel apparently failed to sufficiently prosper in the first ten years after it was platted, because in 1899, ten years after the Rocky Fork Town and Electric Company platted Laurel, it sold most of the remaining, unsold, town lots to Ida and Edgar Camp. The earliest surviving plat of Laurel dates to that year, when the Camps platted the East Laurel subdivision, thirty-seven acres at the junction of the Rocky Fork branch. It is not clear if the Camp subdivision was platted over the original Rocky Fork subdivision, or adjacent to it, but it seems possible their plat replaced or simply renamed the original, especially since at least one building known to have moved from the old townsite in 1889 was located within the Camp plat (the Malcom Hotel).

Edgar Camp had come to Montana in 1881, and had been in the Yellowstone Valley since 1882. He had been in the hardware, brick, and newspaper businesses, served as Treasurer of Yellowstone County, an alderman, and mayor of Billings in 1889. He and Ida Carter were married in 1886. The Camps spent eight years away from the Yellowstone Valley, then returned and opened a general mercantile store in Laurel in 1897 or 1898, with Edgar's brother Charles Camp. By 1905, Edgar and Ida Camp had relocated to Billings.⁶⁵

The planning of townsites for railroad towns evolved over the years. Laurel's plan, with the town platted on one side of the railroad tracks, not both, is representative of the final phase of railroad town planning. Initially, many railroad towns were platted symmetrically, with the tracks running through the middle of town, with two main business streets on either side, separated by a wide railroad right-of-way flanking the tracks. Billings, Montana was planned in this configuration.

⁶⁵ Deeds, researched by First Montana Title in Billings, MT, files now with the Laurel City Planner; Charles A. Dewar; John C. Hudson, "Towns of the Western Railroads," *Great Plains Quarterly* 2, no. 1 (1982); Johnston, 1, 89-99; Spritzer, 355; Van West, 177.

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The next form to gain favor was an orthogonal plan, in which the tracks were perpendicular to the main business street, bisecting it at a crossing point, which was also usually the location of the town depot. The final phase, and the pattern followed at Laurel, was a T-town plan. Towns were platted on one side of the tracks, with streets running parallel to and perpendicular to the railroad. In most cases, the main business street became the perpendicular street, but in Laurel's case, it was the street parallel to the tracks—Main Street. T-town plans became popular in the final phase of railroad building, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when most railroad towns, like Laurel, were built along branches and feeder lines.⁶⁶

The 1899 East Laurel Plat shows Main Street running parallel to the tracks, which run at a slant from the northeast to the southwest. The blocks along Main Street are the only ones in this orientation, however, and the northern blocks and streets are oriented north/south. Each block has alleys, the Main Street blocks having alleys in a T-formation, with one alley running east/west intersected by an alley running north to First Street. All the lots in the plat are thirty feet wide, a width indicating they were intended for commercial buildings, and that either the Rocky Fork Town and Electric Company, or the Camps, expected Laurel's business district to extend from Main Street three blocks north to Third Street.⁶⁷

The first lots sold in Laurel were on the 200 and 300 block of West Main Street, across from the depot, which had been moved from the original townsite and which was then located directly across the tracks from the buildings at 201-207 West Main Street.⁶⁸ A photo survives of Laurel from c. 1904 and gives a glimpse of how Laurel developed in these years. The photographer was looking north from the depot across the two sets of railroad tracks at the intersection of Third Avenue and West Main Street, around which the earliest buildings were clustered. The town had dirt streets, and plank boardwalks in front of the storefronts, with one boardwalk that ran at a diagonal from Main Street to the tracks, leading to the depot. Every building visible in the picture is of frame construction. The Camp Brothers store, Edgar Camp's business, was a one-story, false-front, building at the northwest corner of Third Avenue and West Main. On the northeast corner was Walter Westbrook's Mercantile store, a two-story, frame, false-front building, behind which was Hohman's Blacksmith Shop. Moving east was a small, one-story false-front with a sign reading "FIRE INSURANCE." Edwin Fenton sold insurance in the building, and also ran a post office, drug store, and candy store there. Several more false-front buildings held H. A. Noyes's and E. E. Lightfoot's saloons and another mercantile. The two-story Malcom Hotel was located at the northwest corner of Second Avenue and West Main. None of these buildings are extant today. The photographer had a view of the north part of Laurel, where the majority of the residential neighborhoods would be developed within the next fifteen years. Only two buildings are visible to the north, the congregational church and its parsonage. Beyond the two buildings stretches the prairie.⁶⁹

The railroad had been the impetus for the establishment of Laurel at the junction of the Northern Pacific and Red Lodge Branches, but the force behind its growth was its rail yards. In 1900, thirteen years after the rail lines arrived, and over ten

⁶⁶ Hudson.

⁶⁷ Charles A. Dewar; Hudson.

⁶⁸ Deeds.

⁶⁹ Photos, Laurel Chamber; Johnston, 384-385.

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years after the Red Lodge branch had been built, the population of Laurel numbered only 368. In 1906, the Northern Pacific, Great Northern, and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroads, all controlled by James J. Hill by that time, made their junction in Laurel. By 1910 the population had grown to 806, and by 1920, it had exploded to around 2,300.⁷⁰

In 1907, the Northern Pacific was at work building the terminal yards, which would make Laurel the leading terminal and classification station between St. Paul, Minnesota, and Seattle, Washington. At least twenty-four tracks, two-and-a-half miles long were planned. Eventually the yards would have a fifty-five-stall roundhouse (one of the largest in the West), a machine shop, an ice-making plant, loading docks, a huge water tank, stock yards, and a disinfecting plant. The original yards cost over a million dollars, a staggering sum for the times. The Great Northern had graded an extension from Great Falls to within two miles of Laurel, which they planned to cross the Yellowstone River at Laurel and follow the Bridger branch up the Clark's Fork to Fromberg. At Fromberg, the Burlington Northern was building a track to connect it to the line through Wyoming to Denver, connecting Canada, Denver, and the Gulf via the Great Northern and Burlington lines. The Great Northern track to Laurel was completed in 1909, and the Burlington track arrived from the south in 1914. Laurel was fortunate to have the space, available land, and readily available groundwater to be suitable for these facilities. If Park City, by 1906 a more significant town than Laurel, had been so positioned, Laurel might never have prospered.⁷¹

The 1907 City Directory lists farmers, laborers, carpenters, hotel keepers, surveyors, waiters, cattlemen, stockmen, hostlers, plasterers, general contractors, doctors, horsemen, telephone operators, milliners, bartenders, stenographers, and butchers, but only a smattering of railroad employees.⁷² By 1919 the pages of the Directory list an overwhelming majority of residents working for the Northern Pacific Railroad. That year, the railroad payroll was \$40,000 per month.⁷³ By 1925, the monthly payroll had reached \$90,000.⁷⁴

Laurel today has hundreds of railroad-related resources, mainly at the Laurel yards, which are full of buildings, structures, and features of a historic and non-historic vintage. Aerial photos show ghosts of buildings and features, and indicate much has changed, been removed, or replaced with new structures. The tracks running through Laurel are extant, and dominate the atmosphere of downtown and the district, particularly Main Street, which runs parallel to them.

Laurel's boom years lasted from 1906 through the 1920s, and a conglomerate of local real estate companies was at the center of it all, promoting investment, and capitalizing on the growth. In 1905, out of the twelve blocks in the ir East Laurel subdivision, Ida and Edgar Camp sold four full blocks, and seventy-eight of the other 140 lots in the subdivision (sixty-two of the lots were owned by individuals by that point). The buyers were Walter Westbrook and Monroe W. Cramer. Within months, Westbrook, Cramer, and Westbrook's wife, Henrietta, put the property in the name of the Laurel

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1, 3, 89-99; Spritzer, 355.

⁷¹ *Billings and Red Lodge City Directory and Yellowstone and Carbon County Directory*, (Helena, MT: R. L. Polk, 1907), 339; Johnston, 89-94; *R. L. Polk & Co's Directory of Billings and Red Lodge: Yellowstone, Carbon, Stillwater and Big Horn Counties*, vol. XI (Helena, Montana: R. L. Polk & Co. of Montana, 1919); Spritzer, 355.

⁷² *Billings and Red Lodge City Directory and Yellowstone and Carbon County Directory*, 356.

⁷³ *R. L. Polk & Co's Directory of Billings and Red Lodge: Yellowstone, Carbon, Stillwater and Big Horn Counties*.

⁷⁴ *R. L. Polk & Co's Billings City and Yellowstone County Directory*.

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Realty Company. The next year, in 1906, the Laurel Realty Company subdivided twenty-two acres to the east of the East Laurel subdivision, and platted the Laurel Realty Subdivision, consisting of eleven city blocks with 185 lots.⁷⁵

Walter Westbrook was the President of the Laurel Realty Company. He had come to Laurel in 1901, with a background as a clothing salesman, and opened a mercantile store. By 1907, Westbrook was President of First National Bank (aka Laurel State Bank), President of Westbrook Mercantile Company, President of the Laurel Building and Loan Association, President of the Laurel Real Estate, Loan and Investment Company, and President of the Laurel Realty Company. His partners in the bank were Dr. James Chapple, Vice President and the following Directors: Walter Westbrook's wife Henrietta B. Westbrook, William L. Allard, Nettie B. Held,⁷⁶ and Monroe W. Cramer. The Laurel Realty Company shared many of the same directors, including Walter Westbrook, J. J. Thornton, William L. Allard, and Nettie B. Held. The Laurel Realty Company eventually went bankrupt. Walter Westbrook died at the age of forty-six in 1912, but from as early as 1904 to as late as 1922, Westbrook, his widow Henrietta, Nettie Held, and their various business entities were involved in most of the real estate transactions in Laurel.⁷⁷

The Laurel State Bank Building (301 West Main Street), built in 1906 at a cost of \$15,000, and the center of operations for Westbrook's small empire of companies, was the first brick building in Laurel. Laurel State Bank, founded that year, was Laurel's first local bank. In 1907, a catastrophic fire burned down ten businesses on the 200 block of West Main Street, including the buildings next to this one. This building, "the only fire-proof building in town," survived with only scorched paint on its trim and cracked windows, and probably influenced the popularity of fire-proof, brick construction after that fire.⁷⁸

Across Third Avenue, on the property that is now 217-221 West Main Street, was Westbrook's Mercantile. The frame building burned in the 1907 fire, and Westbrook built the Westbrook Held Brick Block (the Lennox Hotel), completed the

⁷⁵Ida L. Camp and Edgar B. Camp, of Billings, conveyed to M.W. Cramer and W.R. Westbrook, of Laurel, November 17, 1905, all of block number 1, except lot number 10; lots numbered 12, 14, 15, 19, and 20, of block number 2; lots 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, in block number 3; lots numbered 19 and 20, block number 4; lots number 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19 and 20 in block number 6; all of blocks number 7, and 8; all of block 9 except lots number 1, 2 and 3; lots numbered 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19 and 20, block number 10; all of blocks number 11 and 12, in the townsite of East Laurel.

M. W. Cramer, an unmarried man, and W.R. Westbrook and Henrietta B. Westbrook, his wife, of Laurel, conveyed to Laurel Realty Company, a Montana corporation, of Laurel, December 30, 1905 all of block number one except lot number 10; lots number 12, 14, 15, 19 and 20 in block 2; lots 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, and 18, in block 3; lots numbered 19 and 20 in block number 4; lots numbered 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, and 20 in block numbered 6; all of blocks numbered 7 and 8; all of block 9 except lots 1-3; lots number 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, and 20 in block numbered 10, all of blocks numbered 11 and 12 in the townsite of East Laurel.

Deeds, researched by First Montana Title in Billings, MT, files now with the Laurel City Planner; Charles A. Dewar; Van West, 177.

⁷⁶ Almost nothing is known about Held, except that she was a real estate investor from Sheridan, Wyoming.

⁷⁷ Johnston, 6, 110, 298-99, 366, 692, 714; *R. L. Polk & Co's Billings City and Yellowstone County Directory*, 359; "Ten Acres Sold for \$35,000," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 February 1909.

⁷⁸ 1907 City Directory; "A \$46,000 Blaze."; "In Recent Real Estate Deals," *Laurel Outlook*, 10 March 1937; Johnston, 48, 583, 714-15; "Laurel State Bank Nearly Complete."; "Laurel's Leading Business Men and Enterprises."; "Laurel's Strong Banks a Mark of Prosperity."; "Why It Is to Your Advantage to Invest in Laurel?."

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next year, on the same lot. The building housed two retail spaces on the ground floor, and a 32-room hotel upstairs. The building had 18"-thick walls, a partial basement, a reinforced concrete foundation, and each hotel room had hot water heat.⁷⁹

The ambitious scale and design of the Westbrook Held Brick Block indicated Walter Westbrook's optimism and ambition for Laurel's future, as did his Laurel Real Estate, Loan, and Investment Company advertisements. The firm published a front page advertisement in the *Laurel Sentinel* when it was founded in early 1907, promoting "Opportunities for those who realize what it means to grow with a hustling town into one of the largest, most prosperous cities of the great Northwest." The company lured investors to "come where a sure thing awaits you." A later 1907 advertisement in the *Billings Daily Gazette* asked "Why It is to Your Advantage to Invest in Laurel?" and encouraged investment in a "growing, active, progressive, up-to-date town offering more advantages for profitable investments than any town in Montana." Laurel's agricultural business was established with thousands of acres of alfalfa, grain, and sugar beets already cultivated. Work was progressing on the rail yards and "the time is not far distant when Laurel will be the greatest freight division point in the west." The *Laurel Sentinel*, which was focused largely on enthusiastic boosterism in the years 1906 to 1909, published an editorial in 1907 predicting Laurel and Billings would become the "Twin Cities of the Yellowstone," if not the "Twin Cities of Montana."⁸⁰

By the end of 1906, investors had spent \$65,450 on new buildings in the burgeoning town over the previous nine months. Mid-way through 1907, Laurel had ten miles of new, graded streets, with as many miles of new sidewalks. In 1909, the *Laurel Sentinel* reported investments in new buildings in and around Laurel were nearing \$1,000,000, including a new school building, a new steel bridge over the Yellowstone River, new churches, and new ranch buildings. The article described Laurel as "The Future Metropolis of Eastern Montana."⁸¹

Laurel boomed, but in no sense was it a boomtown. The rail yards were a permanent, dependable employer, and sugar beets a drought-resistant crop with a stable demand. The histories of Laurel families who arrived during the boom are those of men who came to work for the railroad, bought businesses and property, brought their wives and children or married in Laurel and raised children, farmed, and stayed a lifetime. Few, if any, arrived with plans to get rich quickly.⁸²

The City of Laurel was incorporated in 1908. The choice to call Laurel a city, not a town, is a measure of the optimism for its future. The *Laurel Sentinel* reported the vote, and ended the article, "Now Just Watch Laurel Grow." On October 10, 1908 a city council and mayor were elected.⁸³

⁷⁹ Kooistra-Manning; City Directory 1919, 1925; Johnston 714-715; "Building New Business Blocks."; "To Increase Size of Storeroom."

⁸⁰ "Opportunity," *Laurel Sentinel*, 25 January 1907; "Twin Cities of the Yellowstone," *Laurel Sentinel*, 21 March 1907; "Why It Is to Your Advantage to Invest in Laurel?."

⁸¹ "\$65,450 Has Been Spent on New Buildings in the Past 9 Months."; "Nearly \$1,000,000 in New Buildings in Laurel and Fine Ranch Dwellings near By."; "Progress in '07," *Laurel Sentinel*, 18 July 1907.

⁸² Gay Easton, "Echoes Project: Interview by Kevin Kooistra-Manning," (Billings, MT: Western Heritage Center, 2008); Spritzer, 356.

⁸³ Laurel, Montana, http://www.laurelmontana.org/About_Laurel/laurel_hub_cont.htm (accessed June 28, 2009); "Laurel Votes to Incorporate," *Laurel Sentinel*, 6 August 1908.

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Many of the very earliest buildings in Laurel were frame, false-front buildings, and some of these survive today, including 115 East Main Street (c. 1908); 117-117½ East Main Street (c. 1908); the Valek Apartments at 201 East Main Street (1908); Montgomery's Newsstand at 9 Montana Avenue (c. 1910); the Owl Café at 203 East Main Street (c. 1915); and Eaton's Paint Store at 13 Pennsylvania Avenue (c. 1915).

The best example of the frame, false-front style in Laurel is the Laurel Trading Company (119 West Main Street), built in 1906 by Charles L. Morris, George Settergren, and Bert George Brockway, a store with a basement and warehouse to the rear, built at a cost of \$5,500. The store opened in 1906 and sold hardware, furniture, and operated an undertaking business. The building narrowly escaped the fire of 1907; the company covered the roof in wet blankets, and its clapboard walls in sheets of corrugated metal.⁸⁴

These frame, false-front buildings became a minority after the conflagration of 1907, when many of the Laurel downtown buildings were rebuilt to be fireproof. In addition, as residents and investors became more assured of the permanence of the rail yards and the resultant rosy future for the city, they built buildings of quality construction meant to be permanent—not buildings of a temporary nature. The *Laurel Outlook* published two photos of Laurel in 1916, one a photograph of Main Street that year, and the other a photo of Laurel in 1906, with the caption "Old frame buildings are, in the most instances, replaced by substantial brick structures." Significant masonry buildings from the first years of Laurel's boom include the brick Citizen's National Bank (1912) at 101 East Main Street; the Laurel Creamery Building (c. 1910) at 16 Second Avenue, a concrete block building originally built as a garage; the brick J. M. Sawyer Company Building (c. 1915) at 215 West Main Street; and the rear building to the Citizen's National Bank (c. 1910).⁸⁵

Perhaps the most impressive of these masonry structures is the five-story McCauley-Spencer Block at 103 East Main Street. The building was built in 1917 at a cost of \$50,000, making it the largest and most expensive building built in Laurel up until that time. It was designed by Billings architects McIver, Cohagen, and Marshall, and built by Billings contractor Jackson and Co. (Chandler C. Cohagen, a fellow of the American Institute of Architects, was the architect for the Yellowstone County Courthouse, the Billings City Hall, and the Governor's mansion in Helena. He was the architect for many educational buildings across Montana, including schools and university buildings. McIver and Cohagen were also the architects for the 1935 addition to Laurel's high school. Cohagen graduated in 1915 from University of Michigan. His first partners were A. V. McIver and W. V. Marshall.) The building originally had retail space on the ground floor and both professional offices and apartments on the upper stories. The apartments were "two-room kitchenette apartments" with entry vestibules, living rooms with disappearing beds, and kitchens with electric ranges, sinks, and iceless refrigerators. The building had steam heat, custom-made electric light fixtures, and telephones in each apartment and office. It was built of brick and structural tile, with decorative stone elements. The architect intended the wrought-iron balcony on the third floor to indicate the building's "domestic character."⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Easton and Eaton, 20; Johnston, 330, 548-49, 638-39, 151-52; "\$65,450 Has Been Spent on New Buildings in the Past 9 Months."; "A \$46,000 Blaze."; "Laurel Trading Co. In New Store."; "New Store Building for Laurel Trading Company."

⁸⁵ "A \$46,000 Blaze."; Johnston; "Main Street of Laurel as It Appears Today," *Laurel Outlook*, 13 December 1916.

⁸⁶ The Montana State Historic Preservation Office maintains a file on Chandler C. Cohagen. His drawings are in the special collections of Montana State University.

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The building is named for Daniel McCauley, a dentist who had his offices on the second floor of this building; and for J. Allen Spencer, who owned a general store with his brother Walter located in the ground-floor retail space in the early years of the building's history. Walter Spencer had come to Laurel in the spring of 1907, and had opened a store with W. A. McIlrath. The Spencer-McIlrath store burned in the fire of the same year. Spencer moved his store several times after the fire until locating in this building in 1917, by which time he was in business with his brother Allen Spencer. The retail space in the McCauley-Spencer Block later had a long history as Laurel's JC Penney Company store, which was located in this building from at least 1930-1955.⁸⁷

The Wold Building, at 101 West Main Street, is another landmark building in Laurel, and its physical history illustrates the shift from frame to more permanent brick construction. Walter and Henrietta Westbrook and Nettie Held built this building in 1910. The two-story building was frame with wood, lap siding; evenly-spaced, one-over-one, wood, double-hung windows; and a stepped side parapet. The building had two storefronts on the ground floor, and a dance hall above, and was known as the Westbrook Held Frame Building (217-221 West Main Street was known as the Westbrook Held Brick Block). Some time before 1920, the north bay of the building was constructed out of structural brick as an addition to the building. Between 1920 and 1928, the rest of the building was reclad in brick to match the north addition, with resultant changes to the storefront window configuration and the fenestration pattern on the second floor, which was much more elaborate after the re-cladding.

In 1919, Ole and Anna Wold bought the building from Westbrook's widow Henrietta and Nettie Held. Ole M. Wold was the son of Norwegian immigrants, and grew up in Sauk Centre, Minnesota. He married Anna Andrews in 1900, and the couple moved in 1909 to Laurel, where they homesteaded 320 acres south of town. Wold founded the Funk-Wold company, a general store and grain elevator, in 1909, which later became the Wold-Kasner company, both of which operated out of the ground floor of the Westbrook Held Brick Block/Lennox Hotel. The elevator was across the street at 220 West Main Street. Around 1916, Wold moved his store, then called the O. M. Wold Company, to this building at First and Main, and purchased it three years later. By 1920, Wold was also selling farm implements out of a warehouse by the grain elevator. He later sold farm implements and automobiles out of his original retail space in the Lennox Hotel. Ole Wold was also a community leader, and a Montana State Representative for two terms. He managed the company until 1953, when he retired. The Wold family continued the business through the early 1970s, and owned the building until 1983.⁸⁸

As World War I raged in Europe, the Great Northern and Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy lines announced in 1917 that Laurel would henceforth be a terminal division point, and the rail yard capacity would be increased by 1,200 more cars. Later that fall, oil was struck near Laurel, and the town buzzed with anticipation that Laurel could become not only a great

"Architect Cohagen Dead at Age 96," *Billings Gazette*, 12 December 1985; "Laurel's Largest and Most Expensive Building Compares with Any in State."; "Plans for New School Okeh," *Laurel Outlook*, 3 April 1935.

⁸⁷ Johnston, 343, 661-62; City Directories, 1919, 1925, 1930, 1942, 1949-50, 1955, 1960.

⁸⁸ Johnston 349, 728-29; Kooistra-Manning; "Westbrook Held Frame Building."

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rail center, but the center for a major oil field. Oil would prove to be a mainstay of Laurel's economy, but the area would never fulfill its early promise as a major western oil field.

The Laurel community rallied at the start of World War I, seeing three young men and one woman off to war within days of the United States' entry into the war. The same week, the sheriff announced that alien residents of Yellowstone County (presumably the newly settled Germans from Russia) would be guaranteed protection if they remained law-abiding. By early 1918, the Germans in Laurel were required to register as "Enemy Aliens."

The influenza epidemic reached Laurel in October of 1918, and for the rest of that winter, death notices were a regular feature on the front page of the *Laurel Outlook*. The newly constructed school Gymnasium was converted into a make-shift hospital by the local Red Cross, with Henrietta Westbrook as the head nurse, assisted by Laurel's teachers.

At the signing of the Armistice in 1918, Laurel residents paraded down Main Street, stopping short at the edge of Germantown. An ad-hoc council was called to come up with a new name for the neighborhood. The group declared the neighborhood would thereafter be known as "South Laurel." Anti-foreign sentiment was carried even further the next year, when a local movement sprung up to ban all foreign languages in the workplace, particularly the rail yards.⁸⁹

Development in downtown continued through the war years and into the 1920s. Most buildings constructed in these years, once Laurel's strong future seemed assured, were of substantial, masonry construction in the western, brick-front commercial style. The Laurel State Bank built a grand, Beaux-Arts style, brick building at 12 First Avenue in 1919 (later the Yellowstone State Bank). Brick commercial buildings were constructed at 16-16½ First Avenue (c. 1920), and the Laurel Library was established in a former dentist's office (c. 1915) at 119 West First Street. John B. Heinz built two brick store buildings at 111 and 113 East Main Street in 1919—his pharmacy, and a candy store next door.

The Hageter Building, a particularly substantial commercial and professional building at the corner of Montana and East Main Street (6 Montana Avenue), was completed in 1919, and was built by Rudolph W. Hageter, who, with his wife, owned the property from 1911-1923. The new building cost a staggering \$50,000, was built of pressed, Lewistown brick, with a full basement, space for the newly formed American Bank of Laurel in the front of the first floor, and second floor office suites. It was designed by a Billings architect, whose name on the rendering appears to be G. M. Ilpp. The short-lived American Bank was the third bank to open in Laurel. Elroy Westbrook was President, and also of the Midland National Bank of Billings, and his brother Edward was the cashier at the American Bank of Laurel. Rudolph Hageter was Vice President.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ "Armistice Signed, Kaiser Abdicates and War Ends," *Laurel Outlook*, 13 November 1918; "Enthusiasm at Patriotic Meeting," *Laurel Outlook*, 18 April 1917; "Germans Must Register If Not Naturalized," *Laurel Outlook*, 2 January 1918; "Gymnasium Now Hospital," *Laurel Outlook*, 6 November 1918; "Laurel Is the Center of Newest Oil Field," *Laurel Outlook*, 12 December 1917; "Laurel Starts New Period as Terminal," *Laurel Outlook*, 2 May 1917; "Oil Struck at Schnauer Ranch," *Laurel Outlook*, 3 October 1917; "Sheriff Matlock Issues Warning," *Laurel Outlook*, 18 April 1917; "Spanish 'Flu' Strikes Laurel," *Laurel Outlook*, 16 October 1918; "'Speak English or Quit' Goes On," *Laurel Outlook*, 19 February 1919.

⁹⁰ "American Bank Building Is Purchased."; "Hageter Building [Rendering]."; "Laurel's Strong Banks a Mark of Prosperity."; "To Spend \$153,000 in Business Area."; "To Start Work on \$35,000 Building."

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The railroad and agriculture were the two primary economic forces in Laurel until the mid 1920s, when a third industry became a significant force. Throughout the early 1920s, the area surrounding Laurel was repeatedly drilled to explore for oil. In 1922, the Northwest Refining Company bought a site for a 2,000-barrel refinery, again causing the community to buzz with the possibility of a third major industry in Laurel. The Northwest Refining Company never built their refinery, however. In 1927, productive oil fields were discovered in the Oregon Basin of Wyoming, and the next year, another oil company, the Yellowstone Petroleum Corporation, considered Laurel as the site for a refinery. In October of 1929, a week before Black Tuesday, the *Laurel Outlook* published a banner headline, "BUILD REFINERY HERE." The attraction for the Laurel Leaf Refinery was Laurel's railroad shipping center, an ideal location to receive crude oil shipped by rail from the Oregon Basin, and from which to ship refined oil products. The oil proved to have such a high concentration of sulfur that the refinery went bankrupt in 1931. Two years later, it reopened in 1933 as the Independent Refining Company, refining crude oil from the Oregon Basin, Wyoming, Dry Creek, Montana, and Elk Basin, Wyoming. In 1943, the Farmers Union Central Exchange, now CENEX, bought the refinery.⁹¹

The Great Depression and the Second World War: A Lull in Laurel's Development (1929-1945)

Thanks to the refinery and the rail yards, Laurel weathered the Great Depression better than many towns. In 1930, the Northern Pacific Railroad announced a major car-building program, and the Laurel yards were one of three in the country to take on the work. The rail yards had just finished a major expansion and construction campaign in 1929, and the yard continued to employ local men throughout the Depression. In 1934, the shops were given 250 boxcars to rebuild, employing fifty men for four months, and in 1936, 250 new stock cars were ordered from the Laurel shops. The refinery, a relatively stable industry during the Depression, invested funds in improvements and additions over the Depression years, including \$125,000 for a rebuilding project in 1936, increasing employment and productivity. In 1937, the refinery began producing emulsified asphalt.⁹²

Laurel wasn't untouched by the decline, however, and by 1933, 150 Laurel men were on the Civil Works Administration (CWA) payroll, working in the streets of Laurel to replace water mains and repave and gravel the streets. The CWA was a program of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) that provided employment over the winter of 1934-35. In 1934, the CWA increased work in Laurel to include improvements to the City Hall, and more water main replacements. The CWA also reemployed teachers to run an Americanization school in Laurel for aliens wishing to become citizens, and to teach home economics to housewives. In the winter of 1933-34, the CWA pumped \$50,000 into Laurel employment, and the city provided \$20,000 of their own funding for the projects, mostly for materials for the water

⁹¹ "Black Butte Is Scene of Newest Search for Oil in Laurel District," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 May 1921; "Build Refinery Here," *Laurel Outlook*, 23 October 1929; "Deep Test Drilling at Duck Creek Resumes," *Laurel Outlook*, 13 June 1921; Johnston, 99-103; "Laurel Considered as Site of Oil Refinery," *Laurel Outlook*, 15 February 1928; "Northwest Company Buys Site for 2,000-Barrel Refinery at Laurel," *Laurel Outlook*, 28 June 1922; "Refinery Launches New Production," *Laurel Outlook*, 7 June 1933; Spritzer, 356; "Us Geological Survey Recommends Field Here Be Tested for Oil and Gas Development," *Laurel Outlook*, 19 October 1923.

⁹² "250 Stock Cars Ordered Built at Laurel Shops," *Laurel Outlook*, 19 February 1936; "Additions to Local Refinery," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 August 1937; Johnston, 72-75, 380-81; "Laurel Shops to Rebuild 250 Cars," *Laurel Outlook*, 30 May 1934; "Laurel Taking Holiday Thursday to See Railroad Plants in Operation," *Laurel Outlook*, 28 August 1929; "Local Shops Share in Car Building-One of Three," *Laurel Outlook*, 10 December 1930; "Np Announces Huge Car Building Program in Own Shops, Coming Year," *Laurel Outlook*, 26 November 1930; "Refinery Launches Rebuilding Plan," *Laurel Outlook*, 26 February 1936; "Refinery's Improvements Well Along," *Laurel Outlook*, 25 July 1934; "Shop Forces Ordered to Go on 6-Day Week," *Laurel Outlook*, 3 February 1937.

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main replacement. Later in 1934 under FERA/CWA, improvements were made to city parks, men worked on grading and drainage projects, and water main work continued. A FERA cannery opened in the LL Club (313 West Main Street), employing those on relief in canning food for others on relief, and FERA funding provided \$30,000 for labor to build the city's reservoir, begun in 1935. The high school building was expanded in 1935 using Public Works Administration (PWA) funding for an addition designed by McIver & Cohagen, architects. The PWA also funded drought relief in the Laurel area, as did the Civilian Conservation Corps.

In 1934, a Transient Relief Office opened in Laurel, a crossroads for the unemployed travelling the country, and served as many as 500 people a day, giving out sixty-cent meal tickets which could be used in local restaurants. Riverside Park, on the south side of the Yellowstone River from Laurel, and the location of a dance hall, became a Transient Camp, where men staying longer than twenty-four hours were examined by a physician, fumigated, and admitted for several days' work. The Laurel City Council provided the materials for the buildings and improvements, and the labor was provided by the transients, with the goal of creating a city park that would revert to Laurel after the Depression. In August of 1934, 7,712 transients stopped in Laurel, providing 14,006 days of service. The largest New Deal Agency, the Works Progress Administration, was also a Depression-era presence in Laurel. In the fall of 1935, the Transient Camp at Riverside Park became a WPA work camp, and WPA workers continued to build the river-rock buildings that would become a city park facility. The WPA also built the Laurel Public Library addition in 1937, which was designed by city engineer T. A. Rigney. Riverside Park was reborn yet again as a National Youth Administration (NYA) summer camp for girls in 1937. The girls at the camp worked on landscaping the newly built facility.⁹³

Construction slowed measurably in Laurel during the Depression, with most new construction in the residential neighborhoods, but several buildings in the district were constructed during this period: Clarence and Olive Laird built the building at 18-18½ First Avenue in 1938; the collection of buildings at 19 First Avenue was begun in 1930 with a new Post Office building and expanded in 1939 and 1940 with space for a bakery, medical clinic, and building and loan; the three-story, New Yellowstone Hotel was built at the beginning of the Depression in 1929 at 301 East Main Street; and the Barney Hartley Market at 117 West Main Street was built c. 1936.⁹⁴

⁹³ "7,712 Transients Receive 14,006 Days Service Here During Month of August," *Laurel Outlook*, 12 September 1934; "8 of 29 on Relief Take Fera Work," *Laurel Outlook*, 23 May 1934; "\$62,500 Addition to School Has Pwa Nod," *Laurel Outlook*, 23 May 1934; "Cannery Putting up Huge Amounts of Canned Goods," "Christmas Finds 150 Men on Cwa Payroll Here," *Laurel Outlook*, 29 December 1933; "City's Remodeled, Enlarged Library Will Have Formal Public Opening Saturday," "County Benefits in New Pwa Allotment," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 July 1934; "County Cwa Grants Addition to Laurel Project," *Laurel Outlook*, 10 January 1934; "Cwa Teachers Get Housekeeper Groups Started in Classes," *Laurel Outlook*, 21 February 1934; "First Phase of Cwa Closes Here," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 April 1934; "Four Major Improvement Projects under Wpa Forwarded by Council," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 September 1935; Johnston, 72-75, 380-381; "More Ccc Men May Join from This Area," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 July 1934; "Nya Camp for Girls Planned for Laurel," *Laurel Outlook*, 21 March 1937; "Registration Increases at Relief Office," *Laurel Outlook*, 22 August 1934; "Scope of School Work Here Expanded under Cwa," *Laurel Outlook*, 10 January 1934; "Speakers See New School as Economy, Necessity, and Duty in Period of Stress," *Laurel Outlook*, 24 January 1934; "Transient Relief Office Opens; Site for Camp Still Undecided," *Laurel Outlook*, 8 August 1934; "Transient Relief Prepares to Open Mess Hall on West Main for Men Here 24 Hours," *Laurel Outlook*, 19 September 1934; "Youth Camp for Laurel Given Okeh," *Laurel Outlook*, 20 July 1938.

⁹⁴ "Building Is Taking New Stride," *Laurel Outlook*, 11 August 1937; "Building Permits Total \$30,850 for Year Just Closed," *Laurel Outlook*, 6 January 1937; "Construction of New Building Planned," *Laurel Outlook*, 24 July 1940; "Laird Opening New Electric Shop Soon," *Laurel Outlook*, 27 October 1937; "New Three-Story Hotel," "Post Office in New Location on First Avenue," "Site of New Post Office Will Be on First Avenue," *Laurel Outlook*, 10 September 1930.

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Tourism in Montana had become a bigger industry than oil or coal by 1928. The Yellowstone Trail was the first transcontinental highway in the northern part of the United States. Completed in 1917, it ran from Plymouth, Massachusetts to Seattle, Washington. The road passed directly through downtown Laurel, following the route of Old Highway 10/Main Street. While Laurel was never a significant tourist destination, the surge in automobile travel along the Yellowstone Trail, as well as train travel, brought tourism to Yellowstone County, which was third in the state for tourism dollars spent. The Yellowstone Trail Association chose Laurel in 1928 as the site of one of nine tourism bureaus between Chicago and Spokane, Washington.⁹⁵

During the Depression, Americans continued to travel, and automobile tourism was seen as a boon to Montana's economy. The *Laurel Outlook* reported Montana was seeing the heaviest tourist travel in years in the summer of 1935. In 1937, the City of Laurel created a tourist attraction in the park to the east of the railroad underpass, then called Main Street Park or Northern Pacific Park, and now the Chamber of Commerce and Fireman's Park (108 East Main Street). The City hired Max Big Man, a Crow Indian, to live in the park for the summer in teepees with his family, and to give talks on Indian life to passing tourists. The Montana Highway Department (MHD) was charged with promoting state tourism, and constructed a string of roadside museums across the state. In 1938, MHD Plains Engineer Bob Fletcher encouraged Laurel to construct one of these roadside museums in Main Street Park to attract tourists. The building that is now the Laurel Chamber of Commerce was designed and built by the MHD in 1938 as the Laurel Roadside Museum, and the City of Laurel staffed and operated it. The museum included exhibits of fossils, stone tools, dinosaur bones, a mounted bison head, and a diorama depicting the early Euro-American explorers. The building also served as a police station.⁹⁶

In 1936 several Depression-era road projects changed the face of Laurel as seen by automobile passengers. In that year the railroad underpass on First Avenue was built by the State Highway Commission, and the overpass on the railroad at the far eastern end of the Laurel yards, now at the eastern Laurel interstate exit, was built. Main Street was widened, and a safety lane added on East Main Street for cars turning to head south through the new First Avenue underpass. A new bridge, spanning the Yellowstone River south of Laurel and replacing a bridge that had collapsed in 1934, was completed that year as well.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ "Tourist Business Is Fifth Industry Here," *Laurel Outlook*, 25 January 1928; "Tourists by Thousands Came to State Last Year," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 June 1924; "Yellowstone Trail", <http://www.yellowstonetrail.org/> (accessed July 1, 2009); "Yellowstone Trail", http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yellowstone_Trail (accessed July 1 2009); "Yellowstone Trail Puts Bureau Here," *Laurel Outlook*, 6 May 1928.

⁹⁶ Jon Axline, "More History by the Highway: The Laurel Roadside Museum," *Newslines: Montana Department of Transportation Newsletter* (June 2007); "Big Man, Prominent Crow, Will Reside Main Street Park," *Laurel Outlook*, 28 April 1937; "Heaviest Tourist Travel in Years Reflects General Gain in Condition of Business," *Laurel Outlook*, 17 July 1935; "Indian Village Draws Thousands," *Laurel Outlook*, 18 August 1938; "Main Street Park Plan Gains Highway Approval," *Laurel Outlook*, 13 March 1936; "New History Diarama at Museum Depicts Arrival of Man in This Region," *Laurel Outlook*, 3 August 1938; "New Museum Opens to Tourist Visitors," *Laurel Outlook*, 15 June 1938; "Plans Approved for Museum in N. P. Park: One of Several Scheduled for Use in State," *Laurel Outlook*, 2 March 1938; "Police Station Opening in Park," *Laurel Outlook*, 22 June 1938; "This Museum Will Be in Main Street Park [Rendering]," *Laurel Outlook*, 9 March 1938; "White Teepees in Park Cause First Tourists to Stop for Acquaintance with Indians," *Laurel Outlook*, 19 May 1937.

⁹⁷ "Main Street Park Plan Gains Highway Approval."; "N. P. Grant of 20 Foot Strip Clears Way for Main Street Safety Lane," *Laurel Outlook*, 9 July 1937; "New Bridge Here Is Opened to Traffic," *Laurel Outlook*, 10 June 1936; "Progress at Mossmain Overpass," *Laurel Outlook*, 3 March 1936; "Rail Underpass Contract Is Let," *Laurel Outlook*, 29 January 1936; "Rail Underpass on First Avenue Is among Road Lettings of This Week," *Laurel Outlook*, 15 January 1936.

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After the United States entered World War II, Laurel felt the immediate boon to the economy when, in the winter of 1940-41, the rail yards began additional work preparing for war; Laurel received an order for 100 cars to be built, and 1,112 cars to be reconditioned at Laurel. When the 100 new cars were complete, an order for 150 followed. The Laurel yards continued to up their productivity to meet war needs, adding facilities and workers. As the young men who usually staffed the shops went to war, the Laurel yards hired high school boys to work at night in the shops. The farmers around Laurel stepped up sugar beet production to support the war, and Laurel townspeople, including businesspeople, students, the high school football team, railroad workers, and homemakers, were called upon to volunteer to help harvest the sugar beet crop in 1942, when the usual labor forces had been deflected to war-time industries. Laurel residents organized a Civilian Defense, collected scrap metal, practiced black-outs, and exceeded their quota on all war bond sales.⁹⁸

The Depression-era WPA projects continued through the first year of the war, with an addition to the high school gymnasium. But in the years following, construction dipped as the government froze building materials and placed limits on the cost of new buildings. Any construction projects with materials on hand were completed, but there were few new building permits, and none of the buildings in the district were constructed during the war. In 1944, construction began on thirty new houses funded by the Federal Housing Authority to relieve the housing shortage, houses reserved for those employed in the essential industries such as rail and truck transport, and oil refining.⁹⁹

In 1944, Riverside Park took on yet another identity, this time as a POW camp, when approximately 225 European prisoners of war (mostly Germans) were housed there to help during the sugar beet harvest that fall. The park was fitted by the farmers needing labor with high, barbed wire fences, and wooden, watchtower platforms.¹⁰⁰

Post-War Industry and Commercial Development (1945-1960)

The post-war years were prosperous in Laurel. The rail yards continued to expand their facilities, and the oil refinery completed a \$4 million expansion in 1952, and a \$3 million expansion in 1957. Across Montana, the number of businesses increased 117 percent between 1944 and 1949, the largest sector of which was the construction industry, which

⁹⁸ "613 Young Men Register Here for U. S. Draft," *Laurel Outlook*, 6 October 1940; "Addition to Tracks in Laurel Yards Is Begun," *Laurel Outlook*, 18 March 1942; "Citizens Asked to Help Save Threatened Beets," *Laurel Outlook*, 30 September 1942; "City Is 20% Past Its Bond Quota," *Laurel Outlook*, 5 May 1943; "Civilian Defense Organized," *Laurel Outlook*, 11 March 1942; Easton, "Echoes Project: Interview by Kevin Kooistra-Manning."; "Farmers Contracting to Grow More Sugar for the War," *Laurel Outlook*, 1 April 1942; "First Black-out Impends," *Laurel Outlook*, 6 January 1943; "Laurel Young Man Is Called for Draft by First Number Drawn," *Laurel Outlook*, 30 October 1940; "Laurel's Old Iron Bedsteads, Water Heaters Go to War," *Laurel Outlook*, 9 September 1942; "Montana Men between 21-36 Years Must Register," *Laurel Outlook*, 9 October 1940; "N. P. Shops Deliver 70 of 100 Cars," *Laurel Outlook*, 27 August 1941; "Northern Pacific Places \$7,000,000 Order for Cars," *Laurel Outlook*, 18 December 1940; "Reconditioning 1,112 Cars Here," *Laurel Outlook*, 26 March 1941; "Shop Addition Begun," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 February 1942; "Shop Increase of 30 Men Announced for Laurel Plant," *Laurel Outlook*, 11 February 1942.

⁹⁹ "Begin Construction on 30 New Houses," *Laurel Outlook*, 12 April 1944; "Building Permits Total near \$30,000 in Month," *Laurel Outlook*, 29 April 1942; "W. P. A. Approves \$18,263 to Aid in Rebuilding and Enlarging Gymnasium," *Laurel Outlook*, 30 April 1941; "War Curtails Major Construction," *Laurel Outlook*, 16 September 1942.

¹⁰⁰ "Convert Park into a Camp for War Prisoners," *Laurel Outlook*, 11 October 1944; "Council Grants Temporary Use of Riverside Park," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 October 1944; "Prisoners of War Arrive to Work in Sugar Beet Fields," *Laurel Outlook*, 18 October 1944.

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increased 147 percent. By 1952, Laurel led Montana towns and cities for average per family income, largely due to the presence of the rail yards and oil refinery. A second construction boom occurred in Laurel after the Second World War and through the prosperous 1950s, as in most areas of the country. While the population of Laurel had continued to grow slowly since 1920, when it had boomed to 2,300, by 1940 the population had only reached 2,754. In the 1940s, the population grew by approximately thirty-three percent, to 3,663 at the 1950 census, and grew another twenty-five percent in the 1950s to 4,601 at the 1960 census.¹⁰¹

The 100 block of First Avenue, north of First Street, was developed mostly after the Second World War and is a good collection of buildings in the style of the post-war years. The building at the northwest corner of the intersection, 101 West First Street, an excellent example of mid-century modern architecture, was constructed c. 1946. The front shop building at 208 First Avenue was built the next year, and the building in between, the large, modern, brick building at 206 First Avenue was built by Chester and Helen Scott to house Scott's Dry Cleaner's and Laundry around 1950. To the north, Dr. Donald Nottingham and Theodore and Dorothy Bundy built a Roman-brick building c. 1952 at 210-212 First Avenue. The US Post Office building at 109 West First Street was built c. 1955, and City Hall, the next building to the west at 115 West First Street, was expanded and rebuilt from 1952-55. And finally, the Laurel Public Library, just to the west of City Hall at 119 West First Street, was expanded in 1951.¹⁰²

Another block that saw significant construction, and which has a good collection of post-war buildings, is the southern block of Montana Avenue, where three, modern buildings were constructed between 1950-60, the Mountain States Telephone Building at 12 Montana Avenue, the Orchid Cleaners Building at 11 Montana, and the dentist's office at 15 Montana Avenue. All of these building retain an exceptionally high level of integrity, and the atmosphere of the small block, adjacent to some of Laurel's oldest buildings on Main Street, reflects the enthusiasm for the efficiency and modernity of post-war architecture.

A third collection of post-war buildings, which is associated with the peak of America's love affair with automobiles in the 1940s and 50s, are the auto-related properties built in Laurel during those years. The Laurel Auto and Supply Co. building at 305 East Main Street, Smith's Chevron Service Station at 317 East Main Street, the Ford Service Building at 407 East Main Street, the Sherrow Brothers Service Station at 201 East Main Street (an excellent example of mid-century modern roadside architecture), and the service station at 410 West Main Street, were all built between 1944 and 1955. The Lohoff Motel, catering to automobile tourists, had not only parking spaces in front of the rooms for guests' cars, but integrated garages interspersed between the rooms.

Starting in 1957, the railroads started shifting from diesel to steam engines, and the rail yards laid off fifteen men immediately. Others were shifted to new jobs in the yards. In 1958, the last steam locomotives were taken off the Northern Pacific lines, and diesel engines became the standard. Diesel engines did not need to be turned to change

¹⁰¹ Easton, "Echoes Project: Interview by Kevin Kooistra-Manning."; "Expect Completion of Tank Car Shops First of Year," *Laurel Outlook*, 4 October 1950; "Ground-Breaking Ceremony Ushers Start of Major Addition to Plant," *Laurel Outlook*, 11 July 1951; "Refinery Completes \$4 Million Addition," *Laurel Outlook*, 15 October 1952; "Sande Views Growth Wealth Gain of Area," *Laurel Outlook*, 3 May 1950; "Start \$3 Million Refinery Addition," *Laurel Outlook*, 9 October 1957; "State's Family Incomes above U. S. Average," *Laurel Outlook*, 23 July 1952.

¹⁰² Brohaugh; "Completed City Hall Now in Use."; "Council Shown Drawings for New City Hall."; "Foundation Run for New Water House."; "Three City Officers Occupy New Building."; "Vault Delaying City Hall Razing."

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direction, and the Laurel Roundhouse became obsolete. While the change reduced the labor required in running the railroads, the Laurel yards continue to be a major employer in Laurel today. In 1970, the Northern Pacific, Great Northern, and Burlington lines merged to become the Burlington Northern Railway. The same year, the company discontinued passenger service, which became the business of Amtrak, a government-owned corporation.¹⁰³

Conclusion

Laurel Downtown Historic District is a collection of commercial buildings reflecting Laurel's association with the broad themes of Architecture, Industry, Transportation, Commerce, and Agriculture. Laurel's downtown retains sufficient integrity, apparent in the density of eligible resources, to be eligible as a historic district under Criteria A and C for the period of significance 1906-1960.

Laurel was established as a small trade center for a burgeoning agricultural area at the beginning of Montana's homestead boom, supporting the farmers on the rich agricultural lands surrounding the town. Located along the Northern Pacific tracks, the town was not originally a railroad town, as defined by historians today. However, when the Rocky Fork Railroad branched from the Northern Pacific line near Laurel, and a railroad company affiliate, the Rocky Fork Town and Electric Company, platted a new townsite at the intersection of the two lines, the Laurel population moved their businesses and houses to the new townsite, thereby entering history as a railroad town associated with the history of the railroads in the American West. Once Laurel was designated a junction for James J. Hill's three railroad companies, the Northern Pacific, Great Northern, and the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy, and once the rail yards were established in Laurel, the town became more than just a railroad town: it became a major division point, with the largest rail yards between Seattle and Minneapolis. The industry associated with the rail yards was the force behind the growth of the town from 368 people in 1900 to 2,338 by 1920. The stable economy created by the rail industry spurred a healthy downtown commercial life, and Laurel's downtown developed in these years as well. The architecture in downtown Laurel reflects not only the town's quick growth into a prosperous commercial center, but also the sense that Laurel's prosperity was not to be short-lived. Laurel's downtown is rich in substantial brick business blocks and high style architecture, not the hastily-constructed, temporary buildings typical of boomtowns. While Laurel had become an important hub for transportation and the railroad industry, it continued, through the boom, to serve as the trade center for the surrounding agricultural areas. The addition of another stable industry, oil refining, just at the brink of the nation's Great Depression, buffered Laurel's economy from the worst effects of the downtown, and further assured the stability, permanence, and future growth of the town.

While many railroad towns failed and boomtowns went bust, Laurel's story is one of success—success dependant on the larger forces of industry and transportation and bolstered by the agricultural community, all of which fed the success of local commerce. The architecture of the Laurel Downtown Historic District is the physical embodiment of this story.

¹⁰³ Easton, "Echoes Project: Interview by Kevin Kooistra-Manning."; Johnston, 93; "Shift to Diesel Lays Off 15 Men at Roundhouse," *Laurel Outlook*, 20 March 1957.

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Yellowstone County, Montana

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Yellowstone County, Montana

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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of the district, the boundary begins at the southwest corner of the property boundary of 410 West Main Street, proceeding directly north to the center of Main Street. Proceed east to the center line of Fourth Avenue, then one half block north to the center line of the alley running to the east behind the 300 west block of Main Street. Then proceed northeast one half block along the center line of the alley to its intersection with the north-south alley in the same block, then north along this alley to the northern property line of 12 Third Avenue. Proceed east along this property line to the center line of Third Avenue, then south to the center line of the alley running to the east behind the 200 west block of Main Street. Proceed east along the center line of the alley to its intersection with the north-south alley in the same block, then north along this alley to the center line of West First Street. Proceed east to the intersection with Second Avenue, north to the property line of 119 West First Street, northeast along this property line and that of 115 West First Street to the center line of the north-south alley in the same block. Then proceed north along this alley to the northern property line of 210, 212 First Avenue, east along this property line to the center line of First Avenue, and then south along First Avenue to the center line of East First Street. Proceed east on East First Street one half block to the north-south alley in the block to the south (behind the 100 east block of Main Street). Then proceed south along the alley to the northern property line of 12 Montana Avenue, following it east to the center line of Montana Avenue. Proceed north, turning east at the northern property line of 15 Montana Avenue and following it to the center line of the north-south alley in the same block. Proceed south down the alley to the center line of the east-west alley in the same block. Then proceed east along the alley, continuing through the alley behind the 300 block of East Main Street to the center line of Pennsylvania Avenue. Proceed north to the center line of East First Street, east along East First Street for one half a block, then south along the north-south alley to the intersection with the east-west alley behind the 400 block of East Main Street. Proceed east to the eastern property line of 415 East Main Street, then south to the center line of East Main Street. Then proceed west along East Main Street to the eastern property line of 108 East Main Street, then south along this property line to the railroad right of way, following it southwest and west to the point of origin.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the densest concentration of eligible resources in downtown Laurel. Beyond the boundary, resources date from after the period of significance, or are likely eligible but are either houses in residential areas or commercial buildings too far from the downtown concentration of resources to be contiguous with the district.

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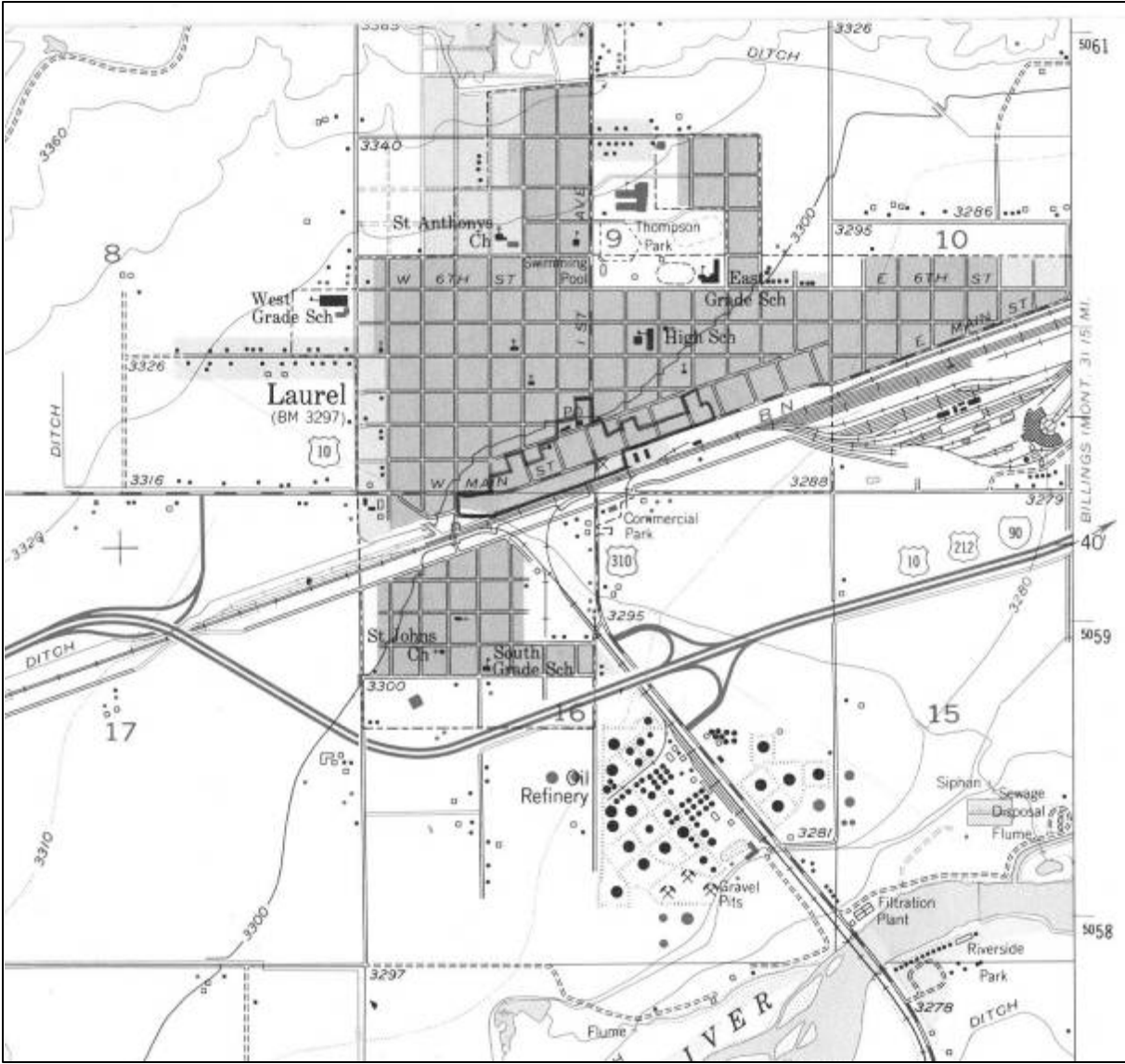
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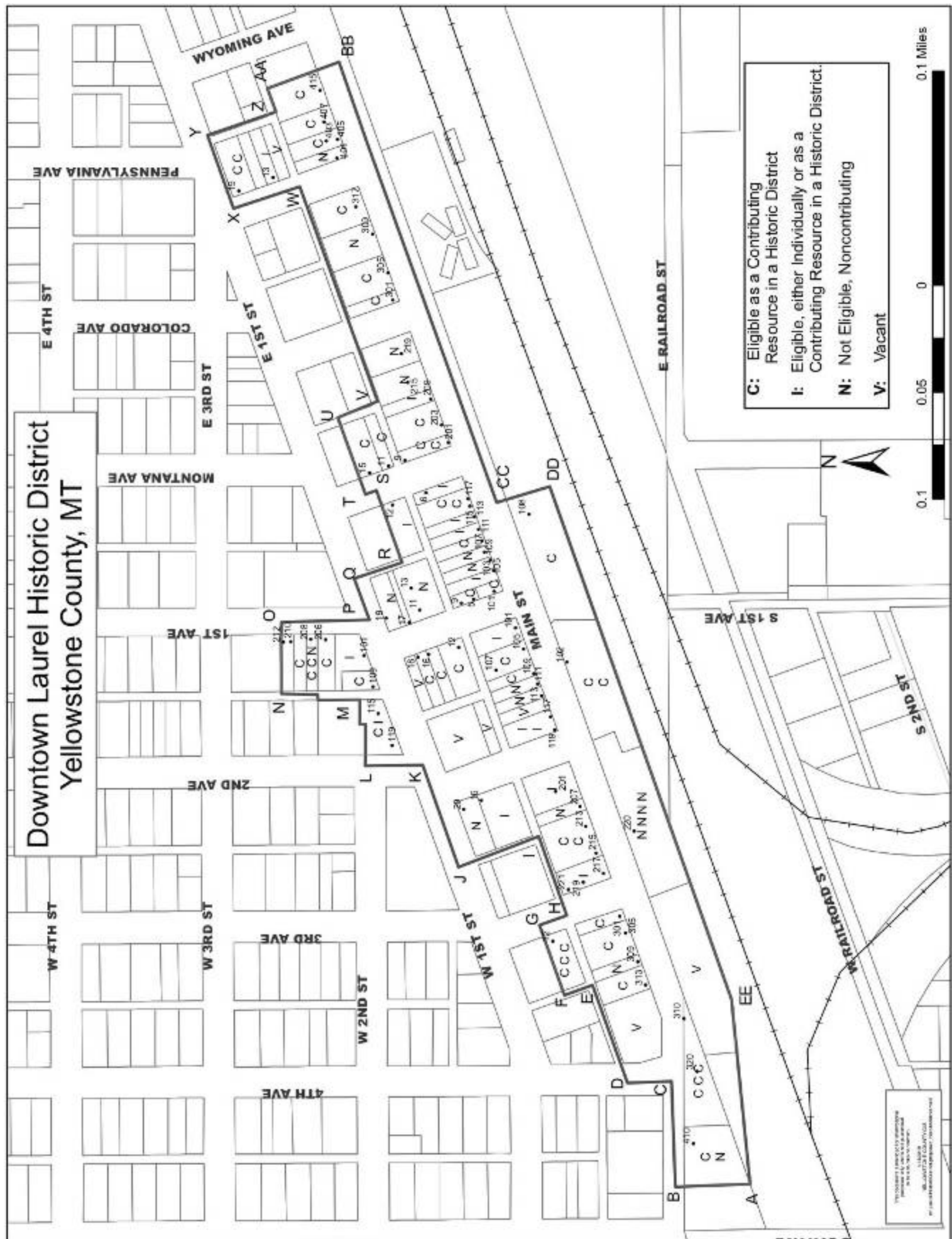
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Laurel Downtown Historic District
Yellowstone County, Montana

Laurel Downtown Historic District. Located on Laurel, Mont. 1956 (photorevised 1969) 7.5' quadrangle map.





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Laurel Downtown Historic District
Yellowstone County, Montana



313, 309, 305, and 301 West Main Street, 200 block of West Main Street

Photographer: Sara Adamson

June 2009

View from the southwest.

Photograph number 1



217-221, 215, 213, and 207 West Main Street

Photographer: Sara Adamson

June 2009

View from the southwest.

Photograph number 2

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Laurel Downtown Historic District
Yellowstone County, Montana



119, 117, 113, 111, 109, 107, 105, and 101 West Main Street

Photographer: Sara Adamson

June 2009

View from the southwest.

Photograph number 3



101, 103, 105, 107, 109, 111, 113, 115, 117, and 117½ East Main Street

Photographer: Sara Adamson

June 2009

View from the southwest.

Photograph number 4

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Laurel Downtown Historic District
Yellowstone County, Montana



12, 16, 16½, 18, and 18½ First Avenue

Photographer: Sara Adamson

June 2009

View from the northwest.

Photograph number 5



201 West Main Street

Photographer: Sara Adamson

June 2009

View from the southeast. South and east façades.

Photograph number 6

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Laurel Downtown Historic District
Yellowstone County, Montana



101 West Main Street
Photographer: Sara Adamson
June 2009
View from the southeast. South and east façades.
Photograph number 7



113 East Main Street
Photographer: Sara Adamson
June 2009
View from the south. South façade.
Photograph number 8

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Laurel Downtown Historic District
Yellowstone County, Montana



6 Montana Avenue
Photographer: Sara Adamson
December 2009
View from the southeast. South and east façades.
Photograph number 9



111 E. Main Street
Photographer: Sara Adamson
June 2009
View from the south. South façade.
Photograph number 10

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Laurel Downtown Historic District
Yellowstone County, Montana



209 East Main Street

Photographer: Sara Adamson

June 2009

View from the southeast. South and east façades.

Photograph number 11



16 Second Avenue

Photographer: Sara Adamson

June 2009

View from the southeast. South and east façades.

Photograph number 12

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115 West First Street
Photographer: Sara Adamson
June 2009
View from the southwest. South façade.
Photograph number 13



101 West First Street
Photographer: Sara Adamson
June 2009
View from the southeast. South and east façades.
Photograph number 14

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Laurel Downtown Historic District
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12 Montana Avenue

Photographer: Sara Adamson

June 2009

View from the southeast. South and east façades.

Photograph number 15

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Property Owners

Laurel Downtown Historic District
Yellowstone County, Montana

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5-9 First Avenue

Ann Bradley
615 S. Third Avenue
Laurel, MT 89044

11-13 First Avenue

Laurel Revitalization League
PO Box 421
Laurel, MT 89044

12 First Avenue

The Yellowstone Bank
PO Box 81010
Billings, MT 59108

16-16½ First Avenue

The Yellowstone Bank
PO Box 81010
Billings, MT 59108

18-18½ First Avenue

Robert and Kathryn Baldner
18 First Avenue
Laurel, MT 59044

19 First Avenue

Marlene Pfaff
1754 Groshelle Blvd.
Laurel, MT 59044

206 First Avenue

Don and Shelley Smarsh
1940 Ranch Trail Road
Laurel, MT 59044

208 First Avenue

Danny and Shery Lowell
2736 Meadow Drive
Laurel, MT 59044

210 First Avenue

Dr. Ronald Benner
Benner Rentals
1408 E. Maryland Lane
Laurel, MT 59044

212 First Avenue

Richard D. Morrison, DDS
212 First Avenue
Laurel, MT 59044

16 Second Avenue

Randy V. and Barbara Mead
16 Second Avenue
Laurel, MT 59044

20 Second Avenue

Grace Bible Church
20 Second Avenue
Laurel, MT 59044

12 Third Avenue

Daniel O'Neill/ WWP 12 Third
Avenue LLC
12 Third Avenue
Laurel, MT 59044

101 West First Street

Cary E. Goldstein Trust
c/o Kenney Properties LLC
2914 Millenium
Billings, MT 59102

109 West First Street

Grace Bible Church
20 Second Avenue
Laurel, MT 59044

115 West First Street

City of Laurel
PO Box 10
Laurel, MT 59044

119 West First Street

City of Laurel
PO Box 10
Laurel, MT 59044

6 Montana Avenue

Ranian
c/o Zachary and Darby Allred
4606 Bowman Drive
Billings, MT 59101

9 Montana Avenue

Fred and Edrie S. Hilgert
c/o Kendall D. Miller et al
PO Box 186
Laurel, MT 59044

11 Montana Avenue

H&H Building Maintenance,
Tamsen Kober d/b/a Orchid
Cleaners T&P Kober Enterprises
11 Montana Avenue
Laurel, MT 59044

12 Montana Avenue

Qwest
1801 California Street
Denver, CO 80202

15 Montana Avenue

John H. Smith and Barbara Smith
Wagnitz
c/o Sam Pollock
PO Box 1025
Laurel, MT 59044

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Laurel Downtown Historic District
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13 Pennsylvania Avenue

Howard and Rose Mary Guenthner
Family Trust
717 West Fifth Street
Laurel, MT 59044

19 Pennsylvania Avenue

Howard and Rose Mary Guenthner
Family Trust
717 West Fifth Street
Laurel, MT 59044

101 East Main Street

Laurel Museum, Inc.
108 East Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

103 East Main Street

Big Sky Properties and Holding
LLC
PO Box 80911
Billings, MT 59108

105 East Main Street

H&H Investment Group LLC
2048 Overland Avenue
Billings, MT 59201

107 East Main Street

Franklin and Joyce Kops
107 East Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

108 East Main Street

Laurel Chamber of Commerce
108 East Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

109 East Main Street

Matthew Robertson
80 Mountain View Boulevard
Billings, MT 59101

111 East Main Street

John and Sedly Barsness
605 East Fourth Street
Laurel, MT 59044

113 East Main Street

Philip D. Maurer
113 East Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

115 East Main Street

117 Properties LLP
PO Box 39
Laurel, MT 59044

117, 117½ East Main Street

117 Properties LLP
PO Box 39
Laurel, MT 59044

201 East Main Street

Fred and Edrie Hilgert
c/o Kendall D. Miller et al
PO Box 186
Laurel, MT 59044

203 East Main Street

Linda Frickel
203 East Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

209 East Main Street

Carra Burton George
405 South Third Street
Laurel, MT 59044

215 East Main Street

William M. Hanna
PO Box 326
Laurel, MT 59044

219 East Main Street

Shawn E. and Bobbie C. Ostwald
3779 Granger Ave. W
Billings, MT 59102

301 East Main Street

Cabert, Inc.
2105 Saddleback Drive
Laurel, MT 59044

305 East Main Street

Cabert, Inc.
2105 Saddleback Drive
Laurel, MT 59044

309 East Main Street

Wayne Halvorson
309 East Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

317 East Main Street

Johnson Enterprises, Inc.
500 SE 4th Street
Laurel, MT 59044

401 East Main Street

Ron Seder dba Seder's Appliance
Heating and Cooling
151 Central Avenue
Billings, MT 59102

403, 405 East Main Street

Kendall D. and Peggy L. Miller
PO Box 186
Laurel, MT 59044

407 East Main Street

Kendall D. and Peggy L. Miller
PO Box 186
Laurel, MT 59044

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Property Owners

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415 East Main Street

Milton and Gloria Wester
1540 West Ninth Street
Laurel, MT 59044

101 West Main Street

Shaun A. and Farrah Marie Jones
Alan Eugene and Florence Irene Jones
212 Durland Avenue
Laurel, MT 59044

102 West Main Street

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad
c/o Jones Lang LaSalle
3017 Lou Menk Drive, Suite 100
Fort Worth, TX 76137

105, 107 West Main Street

Robert M. and Marlene A. Brenden
3012 Lloyd Mangrum Lane
Billings, MT 59102

109 West Main Street

William J. Harrington
109 West Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

111 West Main Street

Larry D. Herman
111 West Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

113 West Main Street

Crowl LLP
PO Box 338
Laurel, MT 59044

117 West Main Street

Walton E. and Helen L. Hayes
3610 Poly Drive
Billings, MT 59102

119 West Main Street

Walton E. and Helen L. Hayes
3610 Poly Drive
Billings, MT 59102

201 West Main Street

David Powers
c/o John Munro
201 West Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

207 West Main Street

Gregory W. Nelson
PO Box 1042
Laurel, MT 59044

213 West Main Street

Carolyn and Carmen Brooks
PO Box 222
Boyd, MT 59013

215 West Main Street

Carolyn and Carmen Brooks
PO Box 222
Boyd, MT 59013

217-221 West Main Street

Leslie and David Atkins
746 N. Wagner Lane
Billings, MT 59015

220 West Main Street

Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad
c/o Jones Lang LaSalle
3017 Lou Menk Drive, Suite 100
Fort Worth, TX 76137

301 West Main Street

Lyndon and Joann Coburn
1524 S. 56th Street W.
Billings, MT 59106

305 West Main Street

Big Sky Woodcrafters, Inc.
305 West Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

309 West Main Street

Rimrock Builders
2107 Harrish Road
Billings, MT 59101

310 West Main Street

Charles Hettman
320 West Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

313 West Main Street

Fraternal Order of Laurel Eagles
313 West Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

320 West Main Street

Charles Hettman
320 West Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044

410 West Main Street

Dean and Betty Fausnaugh
410 West Main Street
Laurel, MT 59044